# Affective Nationalism

## Bodies, Materials and Encounters with the Nation in Azerbaijan

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**Dissertation**

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**Elisabeth Militz**

aus

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**Promotionskommission**

Prof. Dr. Martin Müller (Vorsitz und Leitung der Dissertation)

Prof. Dr. Anna Secor

Prof. Dr. Benedikt Korf

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*The picture shows the Azerbaijani tricolour in the centre in the back and the flags of two Azerbaijani opposition parties. In the front a participant raises his hand to the sky. While pressing thumb and the two middle fingers together he splays out the forefinger and the little finger. He forms the wolf sign – a physical gesture signaling Turkish right-wing nationalism, or, to be more precise, ultranationalism.*

I took the photo on 28 May 2013 (the Republic Day of Azerbaijan) in *Novxani* (Azerbaijan) during a political rally.

# Summary

This thesis unpacks the ways in which nationalism – understood as a feeling of national belonging and alienation – unfolds in moments of affective encounter between different bodies, objects and places in Azerbaijan. Focusing on the development of attachments and detachments to nationalising beliefs, corporeal experiences and everyday routines, rather than expanding on how narratives about the nation are represented, is relevant in times of a global trend to fight for the persistence of singular nations instead of dissolving national boundaries. Based on eight months of ethnographic field work, consisting mainly of observant participation within families, field notes from attendance at public holidays and commemoration ceremonies and qualitative interviews conducted between 2012 and 2014 in Azerbaijan, the aim of the thesis is to explore the ways in which moments of bodily encounter perpetuate banal enactments and experiences of national belonging and alienation.

On a conceptual level, I combine feminist perspectives on Spinozist-Deleuzian affect with Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to develop my concept of *affective nationalism* – the banal affirmation of the national emerging in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects. I propose to examine the emergence of affective nationalism in Azerbaijan through an in-depth analysis of four processes: *embodying* nationhood, *orienting* different bodies and objects across national space and time, *binding* these oriented bodies and objects together and *persisting* desires to identify with the nation.

On a methodological level, I experiment with an affective methodology that attempts to approach the contingencies, potentialities and elusiveness of affective nationalism. Through an autoethnographic research approach I advance the method of *affective writing* that intends to presence, rather than present, research material and remains open for continuous encounters and the emergence of bodies, objects and places constituting nationalisms.

On an empirical level, my *research in Azerbaijan* shows that, independent of elite-led nation-building propaganda, people in Azerbaijan feel invested and thus enjoy their national identifications through performing specific national rituals, commemorating martyrs or relating to the brother nation Turkey. Encounters with corporeal practices emerging through national folk dancing or through cultivating physical beauty ideals turn bodies into national bodies. The appropriate enactment of nationalised ideals of female dancing and female corporeality, promises feeling national belonging.

Beyond a shared somatic pleasure in celebrating holidays and in encountering cultural customs, collective intensities of feeling pain and pride in remembering historical killings merge different people in contemporary Azerbaijan into experiences of national community. Despite past tragedies and the felt incompleteness in identifying as Azerbaijani, people continue to enjoy their experience of national identification. Especially the emergence of Turkey as the national other engenders an enduring happiness of identifying with Azerbaijan.

The thesis advances geographic scholarship on nationalism by suggesting to study nationalism not as a given, but as a potential and an emergent experience of living in a world divided into different nations. I propose to focus on moments of bodily encounter and the spatial and temporal contextualities of national becomings, in order to understand the ways in which bodies' different capacities to affect and to be affected are of central importance for the emergence and the persistence of nationalism.

# Zusammenfassung

Mit der vorliegenden Dissertation zeige ich am Beispiel von Aserbaidschan, wie sich Nationalismus, verstanden als Gefühl nationaler Zugehörigkeit, aber auch Entfremdung, in Momenten des Aufeinandertreffens verschiedener Körper, Objekte und Plätze zeigt. In einer Zeit, in der das häufig hoch emotionalisierte Ringen um den Fortbestand einzelner Nationen stärker in den Vordergrund tritt, als der Wunsch nach Auflösung nationaler Grenzen, ist der Blick auf nationale Erzählungen zwar relevant, scheint aber zu kurz gegriffen. Deshalb richtet die vorliegende Arbeit den Fokus auf die Prozesshaftigkeit der Entstehung von Nationalismus, um zu betonen und herauszuarbeiten, wie in scheinbar banalen alltäglichen Routinen und körperlichen Erfahrungen Nationalismus erlebbar wird und dadurch Verbundenheit und Zustimmung oder auch Ablehnung und Distanzierung gegenüber nationalisierenden Meinungen entstehen.

Die Arbeit basiert auf beobachtenden Teilnahmen in Familien, an öffentlichen Feiertagen und Gedenkveranstaltungen sowie qualitativen Interviews, die im Rahmen einer achtmonatigen ethnographischen Feldforschung zwischen 2012 und 2014 in Aserbaidschan durchgeführt wurden.

Um mein Konzept des *affektiven Nationalismus* zu entwickeln, kombiniere ich feministische Perspektiven eines spinozistisch-deleuzianischen Affektverständnisses mit dem Ansatz einer Lacanschen Psychoanalyse. Affektiver Nationalismus bedeutet, dass das Nationale in banalen Momenten des Aufeinandertreffens verschiedener Körper und Objekte hervortritt. Ich schlage vor die Entstehung von affektivem Nationalismus in Aserbaidschan durch die detaillierte Analyse von vier Prozessen zu untersuchen: die *Verkörperung* von Gefühlen nationaler Einheit, die *Orientierung* bzw. das In-Beziehung-setzen verschiedener Körper und Objekte zueinander, die *Verbindung* dieser Körper und Objekte zu einem Gefühl nationaler Gemeinschaft und die *Verstetigung* des Bedürfnisses sich mit der Nation zu identifizieren.

Auf einer methodologischen Ebene experimentiere ich mit einer affektiven Methodologie, die versucht sich den Eventualitäten, Möglichkeiten und den Unbestimmbarkeiten von affektivem Nationalismus anzunähern. Auf der Grundlage eines autoethnographischen Forschungsansatzes entwickle ich die Methode des *affektiven Schreibens*, die zum Ziel hat, Forschungsmaterial unmittelbar erfahrbar zu machen anstatt bloß darzustellen und die offen bleibt für das fortlaufende Aufeinandertreffen und die Entstehung von Körpern, Objekten und Orten, die Nationalismus konstituieren.

Auf einer empirischen Ebene zeigt meine Forschung, dass sich Menschen in *Aserbaidschan* vor allem mit ihrer Nation verbunden fühlen, indem sie spezifische nationale Bräuche und Rituale zelebrieren, historischen Ereignissen und Märtyrern gedenken und sich auf die Brudernation Türkei beziehen. Körperliche Praktiken entstehen beispielsweise durch das Tanzen nationaler Tänze oder die Kultivierung von körperlichen Schönheitsidealen. Nationalisierte Ideale weiblichen Tanzens und weiblicher Körperlichkeit angemessen auszuführen, verspricht Gefühle nationaler Zugehörigkeit und lässt aus einzelnen Körpern nationale Körper entstehen. Jenseits dessen erleben Menschen durch die Verbundenheit eines kollektiv gefühlten Schmerzes um Märtyrer, aber auch des Stolzes auf das Land Aserbaidschan das Gefühl einer nationalen Gemeinschaft. Ebenso erzeugt das Werden der Türkei zum nationalen Anderen eine anhaltende Freude über die Identifizierung mit Aserbaidschan.

Die Dissertation leistet einen wesentlichen Beitrag für die geographische Nationalismus-Forschung. Sie bietet eine Perspektive, die Nationalismus nicht als gegebenes Gefühl nationaler Zugehörigkeit bzw. Nicht-Zugehörigkeit versteht, sondern als *mögliche* und im Entstehen begriffene Erfahrung des Nationalen. Indem ich das Aufeinandertreffen von Körpern, Objekten und Orten in einem spezifischen historischen und räumlichen Kontext in den Mittelpunkt stelle, biete ich eine Perspektive an, die uns hilft zu verstehen, dass gerade unterschiedliche Kapazitäten von verschiedenen Körpern zu affizieren und affiziert zu werden für die Entstehung und Verstetigung von Nationalismus von höchster, bislang kaum beachteter, Relevanz sind.

# Preface

In fall 2011, this PhD project began as a research project at the University of Jena that was interested in examining national identity narratives in Azerbaijan. Since summer 2013, it has turned into the project that it is now, centring on bodies, feelings and the emergence of nationalism in Azerbaijan.

A book chapter has developed out of the research time in Jena and was published as Militz, Elisabeth. 2016. 'Public Events and Nation-Building in Azerbaijan'. In *Nation-Building and Identity in the Post-Soviet Space: New Tools and Approaches*, ed. By Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, 176-194. London, New York: Routledge. As my conceptual and methodological foci have shifted since developing the PhD project at the University of Zurich, this publication contributes to the literature on nation-building practices in the post-Soviet space, but, as such, it is not a part of the PhD project (anymore).

Sections 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 5.1 and 6.2 include edited excerpts from Militz, Elisabeth (70 per cent) and Carolin Schurr (30 per cent). 2016. 'Affective nationalism: banalities of belonging in Azerbaijan', *Political Geography* 54 (Special Issue: Banal Nationalism 20 Years on): 54-63.

An earlier version of section 4.1 is currently in print as Militz, Elisabeth. 2017. 'On affect, dancing and national bodies'. In *Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*, ed. by Michael Skey and Marco Antonsich. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

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My sincerest thanks go to my friends at the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich and to former colleagues from the University of Jena. Especially my fellow space cadets from the Space & Organization unit Chris Gaffney, Nadja Imhof, Suncana Laketa and Daniel Wolfe have

helped and supported me at various stages during the PhD – and they have made the time in Zurich so much more fun. I am thankful to Carolin Schurr for turning me into a feminist geographer and for her patience and support during the past months. I am also particularly grateful to Cindy Sturm for commenting on earlier drafts of some of the chapters and to Katharina Fleischmann, Diana Griesinger and David Scheuing for continuous intellectual exchange and friendship. I am also grateful to Annika Mattissek and Paul Reuber for their academic support when I most needed it.

I especially thank Lukas Gmünder for his invaluable help with the figures, with formatting the thesis and, in particular, with crafting my personal Azerbaijan map.

Of course, this research could never have been possible without the hospitality, trust, warmth and openness of my families, friends, research partners and informants in Azerbaijan. I am more than grateful for their kindness. *Cox, cox sağolun!*

I started my PhD life under the supervision of Heiko Schmid who encouraged me to pursue a PhD and to continue my work in Azerbaijan in the first place. I dedicate the thesis to his memory.

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# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ayran* | soft drink made of yoghurt, water and salt |
| *Idə* | small, red fruit |
| *Innab* | small, red fruit, also commonly referred to as jujube fruit |
| *Xonça* | assorted plate of sweets to be prepared for *Novruz Bayramı* celebrations |
| *Xurma* | small blackish fruit |
| *Lahmaçun* | thin yeast dough topped with minced lamb meet |
| *Muğam* | a type of folk music that often combines poetry and musical improvisation |
| *Namaz* | Muslim prayer, performed five times a day facing Mecca |
| *Novruz Bayramı* | New Year's Festival to be celebrated throughout March |
| *Oğlan toyu* | the boy's wedding |
| *Paxlava* | diamond-shaped, layered pastry made of thin filo, nuts and honey |
| *Qız toyu* | the girl's wedding |
| *Qurban Bayramı* | Islamic Festival of Sacrifice |
| *Səkərbura* | pastry filled with sugar and finely ground nuts |
| *Səməni* | sprouted wheat that is bounded with a red ribbon |
| *Şor Qoğal* | savoury, spiced flaky pastry with cumin and black sesame |
| *Üzərlik* | dried green plant with small round fruits |
| *VAZ-2104* | since the 1980s of the former Soviet Union a popular medium-sized family car, commonly referred to as Lada |

# 1 Experiences of nationalism

I was never interested in football, even though it was a big thing growing up in Germany. After Germany hosted the men's football World Cup in 2006, public viewings of matches have become an unquestioned institution during European or World championships and flags routinely decorate cars, living rooms and cheeks. Given football's popularity in Germany, does it surprise that I find myself watching a game of the men's football World Cup quarter-finals on a sultry late afternoon of July 2010 in the courtyard of the *Marstall* university cafeteria in Heidelberg? From my notebook:

> The quarter-final game, Germany playing Spain, is projected on a huge screen. Hundreds of people crowd on the lawn in front of the screen. The ale-benches on the cafeteria's terrace are close-packed with university people. The crowd, which is in great expectation of yet another decision to be made in the course of this football World Cup, consists mainly of students aged between 20 and 35 years. The number of women and men is about equal. Most of the people are from Germany and Spain. A few international students from other European countries, the US and China disperse in the crowd.
>
> I arrive late and find a spot in one of the back ranks. The game has not started yet. I turn to the huge screen at the centre of the courtyard and see the players of both teams standing lined up in the middle of the lawn of the stadium. I recognise the German team because of the colour of their shirts; the players are wearing black shorts and black shirts with golden stripes around their shoulders.
>
> Lacking football-watching experience I am clueless about what might happen next. The camera zooms out but remains focused on the German players. All of a sudden I am hearing the German national anthem. Listening to the hymn takes me by surprise. I am not prepared for this mental and somatic effusion of feeling shame, belonging and unease at the same time. Nobody seems to talk anymore. The sound of the music pervades the courtyard.
>
> I don't know how to react or where to look. I am uncomfortable and fantasise about vanishing into thin air. The sound of the national anthem sticks around, penetrating my experience of the moment. In a strange way, I feel that the music connects me with those around me. As if it was not only me recognising and knowing the music. I *know* that the other people around me recognise the music in a similar way. The sound moves me precisely because it connects me with these random, unknown people around me. Yet, at the same time, I wish I could resist feeling this emergent sense of belonging to a national community. I feel embarrassed as I realise how I am failing.

> I keep staring at the screen. I am desperate for the awkward moment to end any second. Some of the players are moving their lips to the words of the lyrics. Even though I can't hear them sing, the lyrics are passing in my mind's eye. Watching them sing, I become even more embarrassed. When the music finally ends, I feel partial relief. My body relaxes. Yet, the moment leaves me confused and with the aftertaste of an unfinished business...

As I had expected to observe athletes chasing a ball on a green lawn, hearing the German national anthem takes me by surprise. I instantly recognise the music. Mixed feelings mark this moment of bodily encounter – of hearing the national anthem within a crowd of hopeful spectators watching an international football game. I feel belonging and embarrassment at the same time. Yet, why am I so bothered by hearing the German national anthem at all? Why can I not resist paying attention to the music, the crowd and the players singing the anthem?

Revisiting my feelings and bodily discomfort in the vignette shows the ways in which I become invested in the moment. Feeling shame and belonging at the same time, I experience this moment of sitting in the *Marstall* cafeteria, expecting an international football game to start and recognising the German national anthem, as an intense feeling of discomfort. I also feel connected with the people around me in a bizarre way. Even without communicating with others, I believe that most of the bodies in the courtyard share a specific tacit knowledge about the national anthem and about knowing how, when and why to react. While I feel embarrassment, I understand that other people around me might feel pride. Yet, what makes me think and feel that these other people and I share a specific knowledge about the German national anthem? I do not know who feels German and who does not, who is German and who is not.

My national sense-making intensifies my discomfort. I feel ashamed as troubled histories of a German national past unfold in and through the encounter with the national anthem, the people around me, the players in the middle of the lawn and the knowledge of conforming to ways of behaviour and feeling when getting in contact with national representations. I become 'implicated in national shame insofar as [I] already belong to the nation, insofar as [my] allegiance has already been given to the nation, and [I] can be subject to its address' (Ahmed 2004c, 102). In the end, the moment leaves me confused and only partially relaxed, as I come to realise that I am trapped. Even if I decided to not care, to actually ignore the German national anthem, its sound would unsettle me in an instant over and over again; whether I want to or not. What makes me reproduce, enact and contest these feelings of national belonging and alienation? Or, following Anne-Marie Fortier's (2008, 9) thoughts: 'what strategies of dis/avowal are deployed to ensure the endurance of national love?'

In order to find an answer to this question, I turn to moments of affective encounter. The encounter between different bodies and objects in the *Marstall* cafeteria, I argue, engenders feelings of national belonging and alienation, the recognition of the anthem, the experience of collectively shared shame and pride and the continuation of partial discomfort with what feels national even after the moment had passed. I understand the situation as a moment of *affective nationalism* – the banal affirmation of the national emerging in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects. The core idea my thesis develops is that nationalism persists as different bodies and objects are unable to withstand the power of national affect in moments of encounter.

You might sympathise with my experience of watching the start of an international football tournament by hearing a national anthem. Haven't you also once followed an international football match by attending a public viewing event, by watching a game in the stadium or at least at home in front of the TV? Have you ever paid attention to the anthems of the competing teams, which play at the beginning of the game? Besides, the sound of the anthem is not only present at a football match but, indeed, expands into other realms of life. You might have encountered national anthems in school, on the radio or during the celebration of a national holiday. How do *you* feel when hearing *the* national anthem(s) you recognise in an instant?

I am interested in addressing questions relating to the ways in which national meaning unfolds in moments of affective encounter between different bodies and objects. Specifically, I want to understand the ways in which bodies become national subjects, how material turns into national objects and how spaces and places transform into national territories and sites. I wish to unravel the affective mechanisms engendering felt communities of shared emotions. To enquire upon the ways in which the encounter with a smell, a corporeal gesture or a historical narrative feels different for individual people, detaching and attaching bodies and objects to what comes to be experienced as nation, is of central interest to me. Eventually, I intend to explain ways in which it is difficult to challenge national thinking and feeling creating geographic and emotional space for nationalisms across the globe. While I use the singular form of nationalism to address my concept of affective nationalism – that means the emergence of feeling national belonging and alienation in aleatory moments of bodily encounter –, the plural form of nationalism*s* conveys that nationalism unfolds as a plural experience as such in a world that situates and marks different bodies and objects in multiple ways.

Conceptually, my development of affective nationalism tackles the ways in which national feelings and symbols, such as a national anthem, unfold in moments of bodily encounter and what these emerging national representations release (chapter 2). To unpack these relationships, I ask:

— In what ways do feelings of national belonging and alienation emerge in moments of affective encounter?
— How do these emergent feelings of national belonging and alienation orient different bodies and objects towards each other and stimulate the becoming of shared practices and communities of collective emotions?
— In what ways does nationalism continue to manifest in people's everyday lives?

The answers to these questions lie in the mechanisms that engender and trigger affective nationalism. The aim of my thesis is thus not to define what nationalism is or can be. Rather, I explore the ways in which nationalism comes to be experienced as something that is difficult to ignore and expands into banal realms of lived experiences in the historical present. Specifically, I look at the emergence of national bodies and objects and the ways in which their different affective capacities implicate them in national sense-making. By focusing on moments of bodily encounter, such as my experience with the German national anthem, my analysis attends to the affective mechanisms that orient different bodies and objects across national space and time. My research project examines the ways in which situated experiences of different bodies and objects engender communities of shared national sentiments and render feelings of national belonging enjoyable.

Trump's 'fascist body politics' (Gökarıksel and Smith 2016, 79), Brexit's 'Leave' voters' 'perceived loss of control' (Bachmann and Sidaway 2016, 48) or US-based South Sudanese women bringing the South Sudanese nation 'into being from afar' (Faria 2014b, 1063) through the ways in which they raise their children, do not only prove nationalisms' persistence across the globe. In fact, re-enacting racism, sexism and xenophobia for the sake of protecting the national body have reached an alarming level of acceptance and normality within multiple national contexts.

At least since Benedict Anderson (1991) debunked the nation as a merely 'imagined community' and Eric Hobsbawm (1992a) claimed that the traditions and myths upon which national ideologies legitimise themselves mark simple inventions, scholars of nationalism face the challenge of understanding nationalism's resurgence and perpetuating power to shape communities (Closs Stephens 2013; Young, Zuelow, and Sturm 2007)

For scholars inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis, nationalism's appeal results from the prevailing circulation of national fantasies, which glorify a national historical past. These glorious national pasts, however, are unattainable and thus desirable. Rather than feeling perfectly satisfying, momentary experiences of nation leave much to be desired. For a nation state in conflict the mere commemoration of national heroes does not restore its territorial integrity. The migrant neighbours

of a xenophobic citizen continue to live next-door despite the xenophobic fantasies of a racist nation. Martin Müller (2013, 294 emphasis in original) has thus argued that national identities 'become hegemonic and sticky not despite but *because* the identification and enjoyment they promise are impossible.' This promised, yet impossible, identification with the nation 'materialize[s] in a set of social practices and [continues to be] transmitted through national myths that structure these practices' (Žižek 1993, 202). Hence, delight about the experience of national belonging or alienation finds its expression in banal everyday activities such as the ways in which people cut bread, greet strangers or feel about the sight of a national flag lying on the ground. As long as the world divided into different nations impels people to make sense of the felt reality through employing and enacting national categories 'the ecumenical appeal of discourses like nationalism rests on their ability to mobilise the human desire for identity and to promise an encounter with (national) enjoyment' (Stavrakakis 2007, 205).

Such considerations about the longevity of national love brought me to Azerbaijan, to the site of my autoethnographic research informing this thesis. It is ironic, but my disinterest in football was what got me interested in affective nationalism in the first place: It was in the middle of September 2008. I happened to be in Baku and Azerbaijan hosted a group qualification game against Liechtenstein for the men's football World Cup 2010. Throughout the afternoon and the evening of the game day I saw several young men with the national flag of Azerbaijan draped around their shoulders. The sight of people wrapped in national flags irritated me. Before this incident I did not consider to wear a national flag like a scarf or a cape. I never even possessed a cloth signifying a national flag. Wondering why people wrap their bodies in national flags, I asked myself, how does it feel to wrap one's body in a national flag? I still do not know. Contemplating this incident with the flag, however, made me realise that people have different relations towards national symbols. While for the young football fans, the Azerbaijan flag might have felt comforting and filled them with pride, for me the German national flag feels like synthetic fabric, state administration and something that should be handled with particular caution. Despite these varying feelings about and appropriations of a national flag, however, the encounter between different bodies and objects, such as a piece of coloured cloth, the anticipation of an international football match or street life in Baku, affirms momentary experiences of feeling national belonging and alienation.

I suggest that the case of Azerbaijan proves relevant for the investigation of affective nationalism as people experience feelings of national belonging and alienation beyond and despite omnipresent attempts of an elite-led nationalism. As a successor state of the Soviet Union, the transition from a socialist to a post-socialist order put explicit nation-building programmes on the political,

economic and social agendas. Between 1988 and 1991, the desire for national independence and self-determination promising an enjoyable future for the Azerbaijani national community mobilised tens of thousands of people to call for independence from the Soviet leadership and to stand up for Azerbaijani people's interests in the conflict over the territory of Nagorny-Karabakh (Cornell 2011). Since the early 1990s, forceful nationalist policies nourished the fantasy of an independent and internationally recognised Azerbaijani nation state. While earlier governments had made an effort 'to reverse the significant Soviet and Russian influence on Azerbaijan's language and culture' (Cornell 2011, 69), the succeeding Aliyev administrations, in power since 1993, focused on establishing a personality cult in the name of the nation. Until today, governmental nation-building projects aim, in particular, at fulfilling the national fantasy of a prestigious, sought-after Azerbaijani nation state and have led, for example, to an extensive construction 'boosterism' (Koch and Valiyev 2015), primarily in Baku. What Bruce Grant (2014, 505) has labelled a 'post-Soviet specificity', birthed, to just name two examples, for a brief period of time the world's tallest flagpole in Baku (Lomsadze 2010) and the opening of a mosque, 'designed to be the largest in the Caucasus' (Koch and Valiyev 2015, 589).

Yet, I argue that beyond these staged national representations, such as large-scale infrastructural projects, banal encounters between different bodies, objects and ritualistic practices evoke delight in materially produced national representations in Azerbaijan. A picture of the Azerbaijani tricolour, for instance, legitimates Azerbaijani license plates. Even in an elusive moment of encounter, the small flag on the left hand-side of a license plate might gain recognition and thus potentially activates national experiences and provides a basis for the identification as national citizen and for the enjoyment of feeling national belonging in a world divided into different nations.

Indeed, the encounter with the sight of the flag on a license plate engenders feelings of national belonging and alienation as 'nationalism takes shape through the visible, ritual organization of fetish objects – flags, uniforms, airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and architectures' (McClintock 1991, 118). These fetishised bodies and objects reproduce national categories and their glorification promises national enjoyment. Psychoanalytic scholars, however, suggest that this national enjoyment unfolds as an inherently contradictory experience. At the same time as the sight of the Azerbaijani flag on a license plate might incite feelings of pride about Azerbaijan's national independence, it might activate past memories about the people who had lost their lives during the struggle for independence from the Soviet Union. In a smiliar sense, Paul Kingsbury (2011) suggests that the enjoyment of what comes to be represented as national might develop as much as a feeling of obligation as an experience of bliss. Psychoanalytic scholars thus

encourage studying nationalism as an awareness of deficiency involving an array of conflicting emotions and different states of embodiment. Yet, they are not the first claiming that 'nationalism works through people's hearts, nerves and gut' (Stavrakakis 2007, 200).

Feminist scholars argued already more than 25 years ago that female bodies, in particular, contribute to the reification, homogenisation and reproduction of national collectivities – for example through biological reproduction, through the ways in which women raise their children or through the 'symbolic figuration: the nation as a loved woman' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989, 9). For Tamar Mayer (2004) different ways in which sexualised bodies constitute nations become most obvious in the moment of, for example, collective rape as a means of warfare when the 'attack on theses [women's] bodies becomes an attack on the nation's men' (Mayer 2000a, 18). As a consequence, various bodies experience feelings such as national belonging or national alienation, national threat or national safety and national pride or national shame in distinct ways. Caroline Faria (2014a, 319) then frames nationalism as 'a set of feelings.' Following her take on the ways in which various emotions constitute nationalism, 'pride, love, desire, ambivalence, anxiety, panic, anger and hatred [...] are powerful in structuring the practice of state bodies as well as everyday encounters and attitudes' (ibid.). Instead of unfolding as a disembodied, intangible and elite-led singular event, nationalism forms an embodied, emotional and as such banal constituent of everyday experiences in a world divided into different nations. After all, also in Azerbaijan it is people, who taste the aroma of a certain tea with their palate, sense a warmth filling the heart when listening to a specific music and rotate their wrists inwards while picking up the rhythm of a specific music. Through these lived experiences of feeling a belonging to a community to Azerbaijanis these bodies, sensations and material encounters enact an Azerbaijani national identity.

If we want to understand the stickiness of national thinking and feeling, there is, however, more than a sense of incompleteness, emotionality and embodiment to reveal about the workings of nationalism: an affective component binding different bodies and objects together or separating them. Following Margaret Wetherell (2012, 4), an 'affective practice' unfolded when I was observing the young men wrapped in the Azerbaijani flag and also when I was watching the international football tournament and was feeling awkward about hearing the German national anthem. These senses of powerful affects engendering felt national communities also emerge from Yael Navaro-Yashin's (2012) *Make-Believe-Space*, Lauren Berlant's (2008, 170) 'intimate sphere of public femininity' or Marusya Bociurkiw's (2011, 5) 'televisual moments attempt[ing] to manage threats to the imagined community of [the] nation'.

Building on and expanding this scholarship, interested in the affective dimensions of national belonging, my own approach unravels the ways in which processes of national becoming emerge and grip different bodies and objects, effecting sentiments of national belonging and alienation. I suggest that an affective nationalism unfolds through four different processes that characterise moments of bodily encounter: embodying, orienting, binding and persisting. As I have illustrated in Figure 1, I will develop each process at length throughout the four empirical chapters (chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7). At this point I shall initially only clarify the relationship between the four processes constituting affective nationalism.

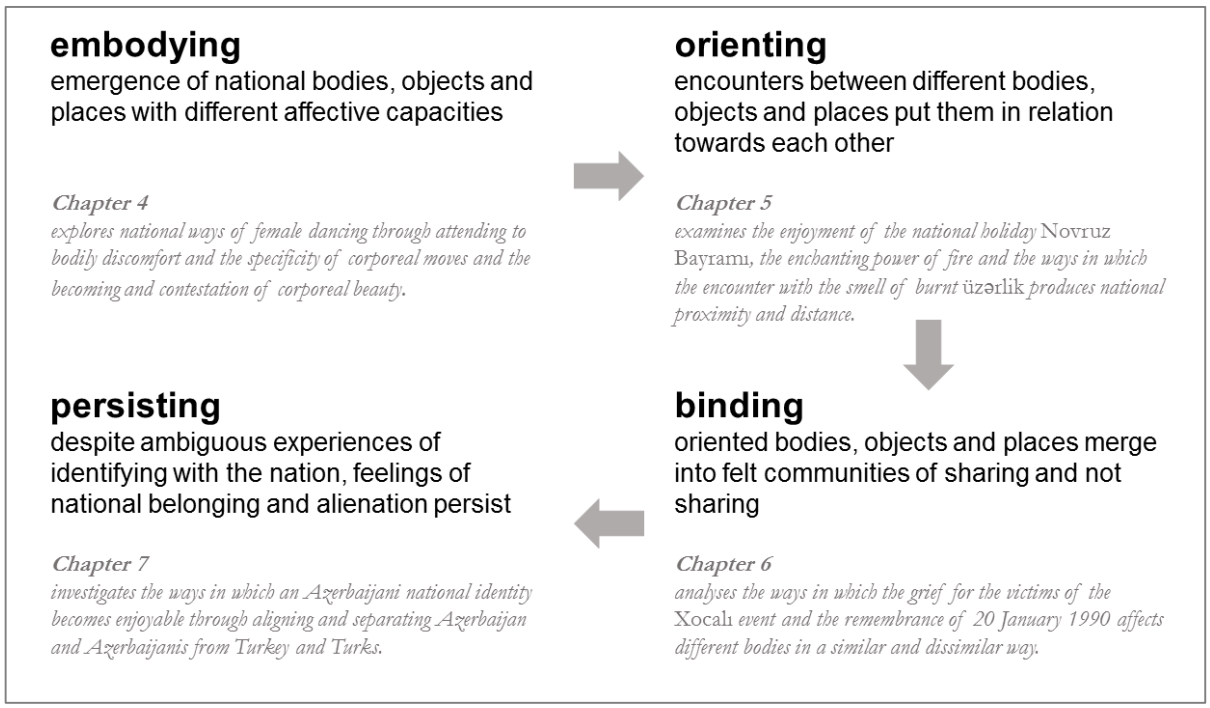


Figure 1: The chapter structure reflects the analysis of the four dimensions of affective nationalism

First of all, nationalism, as an embodied process, requires the emergence of bodies, objects and places as bearers of national feeling, thought and meaning. Yet, these emergent bodies, objects and places have different capacities to affect and to be affected as bodily histories and situatedness mark their moments of becoming. Different bodies and objects thus feel, conceive and emanate national belonging and alienation in multiple ways. The second process in analysing affective nationalism focuses on the moments of encounter that orient these different bodies, objects and places towards each other, attaching and detaching them. Rather than enquiring upon the *why* of national belonging and alienation, affective nationalism examines, in a third process, different ways in which these oriented bodies, objects and places align through sharing attachments and

detachments to specific national narratives, practices and sensations. Processes of binding different bodies, objects and places thus engender senses of national communities. The fourth process of affective nationalism, eventually, comprises all of the above in seeking to understand the dynamics leading to the ways in which nationalism persists. The idea that experiences of national communities and national fantasies always leave something to be desired shows the ways in which relations of desire continue to engender identifications with specific ideas and senses of nation.

In the following chapters the nation takes shape through, for example, nationalising routines and banal practices in family homes, the celebration of a national holiday or the commemoration of people who are believed to have died for the sake of the nation. Yet, it is not just the ways in which my informants find a meaning in their lived experiences that shape sentiments of national belonging or alienation. As a national subject myself, my body and the ways in which I make sense of the felt reality are also entangled and embedded in encounters generating feelings of national attachment and detachment.

To meet the aim of developing a concept of affective nationalism that intends to comprehend the stickiness of national thinking and feeling, my thesis thus also experiments with an affective methodology (chapter 3). As I propose to study nationalism as the potential banal effect of moments of bodily encounters, my research requires a methodological approach, which takes the ephemera, elusiveness and inexplicability of feelings of national belonging and alienation seriously. Investigating affective nationalism means turning to sensations such as chills running down your spine in moments of encounter with national representations. Even though Bociurkiw (2011, 3) describes, in the moment she feels these chills, the sentiment as 'irrational, given [her] ardent critiques of nationalism,' an affective methodology needs to address precisely this what 'has happened before [she has] had a chance to understand it' (ibid.).

In order to develop an affective methodology that renders gut feelings, attention and sensitivity accountable for the emergence of nationalism, my thesis specifically asks: How to attend to the affective dimensions of nationalism? How to represent, or rather, presence the elusive, ephemeral and, in fact, unfathomable affects constituting and enacting nationalism?

Since my study of affective nationalism focuses on moments of encounter between different bodies and objects, the affective capacities of bodies and objects involved in these encounters including my own body and the positionality of different bodies and research subjects play a key role in what gets how included in this research and what remains absent. Not only people's biographies including my biography and the people I have met in academia and during my times in Azerbaijan

influence that I do this research and the ways in which I go about it. Rather, nothing but 'the world *between* [myself] and the researched' (England 1994, 86) becomes the empirical material to be scrutinised. The autoethnographic research approach, which I suggest in favour of an affective methodology, thus aligns itself with Kim England's (ibid. 87) appeal to openly position the researcher's selves within and throughout the research process. As she demands that 'we need to locate ourselves in our work and to reflect on how our location influences the questions we ask, how we conduct our research, and how we write our research,' my thoughts, feelings, failures and irritations will lead you through the empirical encounters of affective nationalism. Yet, drawing on David Butz and Kathryn Besio's (2004, 358) intervention of autoethnographic research in transcultural settings, it is equally important for me to also vary the 'focus of reflexivity from [myself] as researcher to [my] subjects' strategic and always politicized engagement with [me] as researcher and powerful "other".'

I thus experiment with a methodology that remains critical of its limitations and situatedness as well as stays open for a diversification of methods to collect and to analyse empirical material and emergent knowledge. Cultivating the method of affective writing – that means writing through and with affect – forms a central aspect of the ways in which I propose to make the dimensions of affective nationalism felt.

My research builds on eight months of extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Azerbaijan. While I have studied, worked and lived in Azerbaijan for shorter and longer periods of time since 2007, the material for this research project stems from fieldtrips in summer 2012, summer 2013 and winter/spring and autumn 2014. While I mainly conducted qualitative interviews with Azerbaijani-based social and political scientists, social and political activists, public figures, entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens during the stays in 2012 and 2013, I dedicated my longest research stays in 2014 to conduct observant participation through living with two families in Baku and Ganja. My material thus mainly consists of recorded and transcribed interview data and informal conversations, field diary entries, photographs, videos, conversational notes and noise recordings.

What makes my research different from comparable work on nationalism is that nationalism – even in a banal (Billig 1995) way – is not my starting point. Rather, the overarching argument of my thesis is that nationalism becomes a felt condition emerging from ordinary encounters between different bodies and objects. Affective nationalism thus unpacks the ways in which nationalism penetrates people's everyday lives through and beyond staged confrontations with national representations and declarations of national affection.

# 2 Towards affective nationalism

How does affect place bodies and objects in a world that is divided into nation states? Or to put it differently, what role does affect play in making ideas, feelings and practices of nation and national belonging emerge, move people and persist? In order to answer this question, I propose the concept of affective nationalism: the quotidian emergence of the national in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects. The aim of this chapter is to introduce you to established theories explaining nationalism and geographical scholarship's contributions to account for the spatiality of nationalism. I pay particular attention to work that has advanced notions of embodied and emotional nationalism before I turn to present the conceptual foundations – feminist accounts of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect and Lacan's notion of desire – of my concept of affective nationalism. I develop my concept of affective nationalism through identifying its four constituting processes: (1) embodying (to account for the emergence of bearers of national feeling and meaning), (2) orienting (to understand the ways in which encounters attach and detach different bodies, objects and places), (3) binding (to explain the ways in which shared emotions create a sense of community) and (4) persisting (in order to grasp in what ways relations of desire shape the endurance of feelings of national belonging and alienation). I conclude the chapter by outlining how these four processes constituting affective nationalism structure my empirical research.

## 2.1 Revisiting theories explaining nationalism

> **nation** /'naysh(ə)n/ *n* ... **1a** a people with a common origin, tradition, and language and (capable of) constituting a nation-state **1b** a community of people possessing a more or less defined territory and government ...
>
> **nationalism** /'nash(ə)nl,iz(ə)m/ *n* loyalty and devotion to a nation; *esp* the exalting of one nation above all others
>
> — *Longman Dictionary of the English Language, 1984*

At first, I was overwhelmed by the sheer amount of nationalism literature and the disciplines engaging in research trying to understand nations and national identification. An array of theoretical accounts and concepts define and explain ideas of nation and nationalism since global capitalism, or to put it differently, contemporary socio-political and economic structures categorise people

according to their alleged belonging and not belonging to different nations (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). When in March 1882 at the Sorbonne University in Paris Ernest Renan proposed a definition for the concept of nation, he emphasised how the idea of nation is just one mode, amongst others, of organising people. He identified the nation as 'une grande solidarité' (Renan 1882, 27), a far-reaching solidarity, that is, a group of people supporting each other as they believe to share origin and legacy. A nation is thus first and foremost a collective encounter of different people at a specific time and, following this, nations manifest as finite conditions of the historical present.

Like Renan, most authors attempting to define the idea of nation presume an inevitable connection between the quest to categorise and organise people and the principle of nation. On the one hand, the nation has been identified as a 'contingency' (Gellner 1983, 6) that connects certain people with specific ideals at a certain time through, for instance, territorial or ethnic conventions (A. D. Smith 1988). Cultural theorists, on the other hand, have unmasked the nation as a 'narration' (Bhabha 1990) of the historicised connection between a group of people, territories, ethics and practices and as a consequence of the capitalist world order (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Following this, nationalism develops as the mechanism that 'engenders nations' (Gellner 1983, 55), that means that it creates, sustains and cultivates the idea of nation.

According to Anthony Smith (1998, 1) the core idea of a modernist understanding of nationalism entails that

> nationalism is a modern movement and ideology, which emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Western Europe and America, and which, after its apogee in two world wars, is now beginning to decline and give way to global forces which transcend the boundaries of nation-states.

Despite the fact that Smith, almost twenty years ago, prophesied the decline of nationalism, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists and scholars from performance and cultural studies suggest ever more conceptual and empirical accounts to understand 'the rise of nationalism to prominence in modern [...] life' (Yack 2012, 214). The extent of nationalism literature and the continued (if not increased) interest in the matter does not surprise. Craig Calhoun (2007, 29) notices that 'nationalism matters because it is a vital part of collective projects that give shape to the modern world, transform the very units of social solidarity, identity, and legal recognition within it, and organize deadly conflicts.' Nationalism, thus, organises people and practices in what comes to be experienced as a world partitioned into different nations.

Earlier studies of nationalism addressing the question of what nationalism is and where it comes from often revolve around the debate whether to consider nationalism as a political or a cultural

phenomenon. For Calhoun (1997, 6), nationalism manifests itself, first, as a discourse that is generating categories of nations, second, as a project of political and social actors and institutions propagating specific national principles and, third, as a congruity between specific national principles and groups of people. Accordingly, John Breuilly (Breuilly 1993) defines nationalism as a strategy for political movements which apply nationalist arguments in order to exercise state power. Other scholars of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1992b) argue that in the age of modern nationalism political legitimacy is based on nationalist beliefs. Smith (1988, 129) also identifies nationalism as 'the legitimating principle of politics and statemaking today', in the sense that the world order of nation states organises people in space according to a set of national categories.

In contrast, Anderson (1983) interprets nationalism as a cultural product and turns away from a focus on nationalism as a merely political endeavour. He explains nationalism's dynamism by comparing it with the cultural systems of religious and dynastic communities. Dynasty and religion, he argues, stimulate group identifications in a similar way. Similar to religion, nationalist beliefs also offer guidance to live an appropriate and rewarding life. Nationalism thus becomes 'a heterogeneous set of "nation"-oriented idioms, practices and possibilities that are continuously available or "endemic" in modern cultural and political life' (Brubaker 1996, 10).

Feminist and postcolonial scholars in particular have criticised these dominant perspectives on nationalism for misconceiving the masculinised Western nationalism they are interpreting as a global phenomenon. Feminist scholarship insists on the recognition of gender relations that co-constitute, if not enable, national projects (Yuval-Davis 1993; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989).

> Not only are the needs of the nation here identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men, but the representation of male *national* power depends on the prior construction of *gender* difference,

Anne McClintock (1995, 353) warns. Two aspects McClintock raises remain central to feminist and postcolonial interventions in nationalism research. First, she emphasises how the domestication of the idea of nation and nation state naturalises power hierarchies between dichotomous categories such as women and men, children and adults or whites and non-whites. Second, McClintock (1995, 374) shows ways in which the obsession with national tokens such as flags, food, rituals or maps defines the experience and circulation of nationalism. Among other postcolonial scholars, Partha Chatterjee (1993, 6) has pointed out how, in contrast to the Eurocentric idea of nationalism that dominates the academic debate, 'anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty

within colonial society [...]. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual.'

Partly in responding to the criticism mentioned above, recent scholarship on nationalism has shifted its focus.

Moving away from questions engaging with the what, when and where of nationalism, more and more studies investigate the ways in which nationalism plays out. Facing the alleged 'decline of the nation state' (Held 1996, 407), scholars have aimed to understand the persistence of nationalism in a globalising world (Young, Zuelow, and Sturm 2007) and have suggested approaches to counteract nationalism's persistence through imagining alternative forms of community bonding (Closs Stephens 2013). Apart from interpreting nationalism as a 'discursive formation' (Calhoun 2007, 9; see also Özkırımlı 2010) that characterises the historical present and undergoes constant reshaping, Rogers Brubaker (2015, 7), for example, proposes the concept of 'transborder nationalism.' He seeks to understand how 'the nation-state remains the decisive instance of belonging even in a rapidly globalizing world' by attending to the power of religions, diasporas and migration as preservers of a politics of national belonging.

One contribution in particular has shaped my understanding of nationalism: Michael Billig's (Billig 1995) *Banal Nationalism*. While the majority of the nationalism research I have discussed above couples nationalism's emergence and prevalence with politics and elites, Billig stresses the importance of the banality of nationalism. He argues against the common-sense perception that national affirmation emerges primarily with separatist movements and right-wing political parties. He disapproves of the one-sided problematisation of nationalism as overtly political and harmful, such as in nationalist political groups' search for social recognition. He fears that in so doing scholars are losing sight of a nationalism that is intensifying and all-encompassing on the one hand and appears to be innocent on the other hand. What he criticises is the exotification of nationalism. According to Billig, nationalism risks becoming associated with marginalized, lunatic fringes, indulging in their national passions in the periphery and often beyond any territorial, administrative, political, social or moral control. In contrast, he places nationalism right in the middle of society and its unnoticed, routine practices. Billig defines and searches the banal dimensions of nationalism in symbolic representations of the national, such as the daily flagging of the nation, the use of shared languages or the daily reference to the weather 'here' (ibid., 116) in the news. His central argument is that nation states are constantly and unconsciously reconstituted in banal everyday practices and as a result people are constantly reminded of their nationhood.

Sharing Billig's argument of the banality of nationalism, I understand my concept of affective nationalism as the *quotidian* emergence of the national in moments of encounter between different bodies, objects and places. I am, however, not the only one interested in the functioning of nationalism who has been inspired by Billig's banal nationalism. Building on Billig's argument, Brad West (2015, 1), for example, shows the ways in which different types of contemporary national rituals, such as religious pilgrimage and humanitarianism in response to natural catastrophes, 're-enchant', that means reinterpret, transform and re-stimulate, national identification patterns rather than destroy feelings of national belonging. In a detailed study of the Japanese tea ceremony, Kristin Surak (2013, 3) examines in what ways making tea as a form of 'nation-work' embeds national ideologies in the embodied productions of ordinary nationhood.

Even though nationalism research emerges at the margins of the disciplinary debate in geography, Billig's banal nationalism has received quite some attention. In political geography, scholars have echoed Billig's (1995) concerns with the mundane making of the nation in two ways. First, political geographers have explored different ways in which social practices mark out banal nationalism (Paasi 1996; Reece Jones and Deforges 2003). They have analysed the inconspicuous manifestations of nationalism such as postage stamps (Raento and Brunn 2005) and banknotes (Penrose 2011), road signs (Rhys Jones and Merriman 2009), license plates (Airriess, Hawkins, and Vaughan 2012; Leib 2011), supporting national sport teams (Koch 2013) and national maps as in school textbooks and flag-map logos (Batuman 2010).

Second, recent geographical interventions expanding upon Billig's work increasingly challenge the idea of nationalism's banality. As an attempt at overcoming the separation of banal and hot nationalisms, scholars have examined the everydayness of nationalism with a focus on people's everyday making of nationhood (Antonsich 2016; Benwell 2014; Benwell and Dodds 2011; Rhys Jones and Merriman 2009; Paasi 2016). Feminist geographers' interventions have revealed the problems inherent to the binary of banal and hot nationalism by showing the ways in which dichotomous, such as gendered, classifications of people's practices and socio-political and scholarly discourses legitimise nationalising politics. Jenna Christian, Lorraine Dowler and Dana Cuomo (2016, 3) suggest that

> engaging with the inseparability of banal and hot nationalism as "a single complex" helps to expose both how certain forms of deeply hot violence are depoliticized through their banalization (e.g. sexual assault on college campuses), and how things that are recognized as hot (e.g. war) are maintained through processes that are deemed banal (e.g. gender).

Whereas I both agree with conceptual approaches in the style of Surak's that attend to the embodied dimensions of nationalism and share the critical concerns about banal nationalism uttered by (feminist) political geographers, Billig's notion of the banality has inspired me in thinking about nationalism in a slightly different way. I distance myself from an analysis that primarily inquires into the contents and contestations of national ideologies, practices and performances. Instead of focusing on what national objects and places signify and the way people interpret, challenge and transform national ideas – such as an Azerbaijani national ideology –, *I am interested in the way people get placed within contexts of national sense-making and feelings of national attachment and detachment, or to put it differently, of national affectivity*. I want to understand in what ways we come to apply national categories in specific situations in order to cope with certain experiences. I engage with the ways discursive, material and felt representations of nation influence feelings and visceral expressions of national belonging or alienation. Yet, I build on Billig, and others who have expanded and challenged his work, in order to understand senses of national belonging and alienation as a product and constituent of the banality of the everyday. Exploring the roles space plays in imaginations, productions and re-enactments of nationalism, I now turn to cultural and political geographic scholarship's contribution to nationalism research that accounts for the spatialities of national expressions.

## 2.2 Understanding geographies of nationalism

As I have mentioned above, nationalism research emerges at the margins of the disciplinary debate in geography. This surprises as nationalising practices are often linked to practices of territorialisation and the productions of national spaces – topics that have been and continue to be of great interest to geographers. Alexander Murphy (2013, 1216) criticises the ways in which scholars tend to disregard 'the enduring personal and social significance of nationalism and its ability to shape what is happening, and what can happen, in the modern world', in an insightful article about the persistent scholarly as well as socio-political fascination with territory. He suggests that it is precisely nationalism's image as a 'regressive, often destructive, ideology' (ibid., 1215) that invites researchers to overlook their personal and researchable sentiments of national attachment. Scholars remain cautious to avoid any personal entanglement with nationalist thought precisely because transnationalism shapes contemporary academia. It would help, then, to conceptualise nationalism not as an ideology but as the quotidian emergence of the national in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects, as I propose in this thesis. But first things first. In

what ways have geographers contributed to understand nationalism not only as a historic, socio-political and everyday phenomenon but also as a constituting and organising principle of space?

An often-quoted article that has introduced spatial dimensions to the study of nationalism is Colin William's and Anthony Smith's contribution in *Progress in Human Geography* from 1983. Granting nationalism the 'ability to redefine space and to reconstruct the environment as a distinctly political territory' (Williams and Smith 1983, 504), the authors set nationalism and space in an interdependent relation that produces national territories. They tie their concept of national territory to geographic ideas of scale, homeland, boundaries and locality that bring nations into existence. Whereas some geographers have taken up their intervention to investigate nationalism as a social practice that creates spaces as political and historic (Leitner and Kang 1999), others have proposed to study nationalism as a product of its operationalisation on different scales (Appleton 2002; Rhys Jones and Fowler 2007) and explored the ways in which territorial structures and national identity patterns intertwine within the different topologies of national spaces (Häkli 2008; Rhys Jones and Merriman 2012). Yet others have studied the ways in which national space is materially and immaterially imagined (Hage 1996; Johnson 1995).

Among cultural and political geographers, notably, Tim Edensor (2002) has added ideas of space and place to the transdisciplinary nationalism debate, which mainly disregards the felt reality of spatial metaphors and the force of the 'sense of place' (Massey 1994). He suggests different ways in which everyday life does not only inform senses of national identity but constantly reproduces and recasts national spaces, culturally coded performances, national objects and popular culture. In search of 'national structures of feeling' (Edensor 2002, 20), he attributes his concept of national identity to 'unreflexive bases' (ibid., 28) in order to express the 'cognitive, affective and habitual levels' (ibid., 65) of national places, practices, objects and representations or to put it shortly, of experiencing and reproducing nation. Yet, Edensor's analysis stops short of two crucial aspects: first, he misses to conceptualise these embodied and sensual dimensions of national identity formation and, second, he does not account for difference in experiencing national spaces, practices, objects and representations. In order to better understand these embodied and emotional dimensions of nationalism I take inspiration from feminist scholarship.

## 2.3 Minding embodied and emotional nationalism

Feminist scholars in particular have highlighted ways in which the nation emerges through embodied gender performances in everyday life (Mayer 2000b; Staeheli 2001; Warren 2009; Yuval-

Davis 1997). They have also criticised established theories of nationalism for their gender blindness. Reviewing arguably the most influential publication on nationalism, Anderson's (1991) *Imagined Communities*, Joanne Sharp (1996, 99) has observed that Anderson's writing naturalises the nation as 'embodied within each man and each man comes to embody the nation.'

With the notion of an 'embodied nationalism' (Mayer 2004), feminist geographers have challenged the disembodied and abstract nature of much nationalism research in political geography and in other disciplines (Blunt 1999; Fluri 2008; Hyndman 2004; Radcliffe 1999). Examining the political 'through the scale of the body' (Dowler and Sharp 2001, 169) and investigating ways in which 'citizenship is embodied' (England 2003, 615), feminist political geographies have interrogated the ways in which the nation is 'affected by and reflected in embodied practices' (McDowell 1999, 35). Feminist geographers have also explored in what ways the 'gendering of nations in colonial projects of subordination' (Nash 1997, 112), legitimises racial, sexual and cultural hierarchies of different national bodies. They have investigated different ways in which the nation is embodied in such diverse sites as reproductive politics in India (S. H. Smith 2012), women's gender performances in Israeli's occupation (Mayer 1994), rape as an embodied form of warfare in former Yugoslavia (Mayer 2004), gender performances in Ecuadorian electoral politics (Schurr 2013a) and the staging of the new nation in South Sudan in beauty pageants (Faria 2013).

Feminist scholars have developed research on nationalism by emphasising its emotional dimension (Berlant 2008). While political geography was initially hesitant to incorporate the emotional turn into the subdiscipline (Pain et al. 2010, 973), by now a rich body of literature under the labels of emotional geopolitics (Pain 2009; Tyner and Henkin 2015), intimate geopolitics (S. H. Smith 2012) and emotional political geography (Wilkinson 2009) has emerged. Caroline Faria (2014a, 319) points out that the emotional turn in geography offers 'rich opportunities to rethink nationalism.' She argues that 'nationalism is emotional – marked at once by contradictory feelings of fear and desire that require, and indeed depend on, a foreign other' (Faria 2014a, 318). Her work on the becoming of the South Sudan nation demonstrates that nationalism needs to be understood as a feeling of connection, belonging and attachment to the collective body of the nation as well as detachment from those outside of or threatening the nation.

Psychoanalytic geographies have tied in with this call for the investigation of emotional investments into the reproduction of national projects. David Sibley (1995) and Heidi Nast (1998) were among the first to point to mechanisms of purifying nations and the ways in which national imaginations connect with national panics. Nast (1998, 195) has observed a variety of "'unconsciously" registered anxieties over the heterosexualized pure and solidly bordered body of the nation being penetrated,

threatened, overcome, and/or dissolved by a plethora of frightening foreign microbes and dangers.' Paul Kingsbury (2008) and Jesse Proudfoot (2010) in particular follow this disciplinary thread and have reviewed Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis and Slavoj Žižek's interpretations of Lacan's concept of *jouissance* (enjoyment) for emotional geographies of nationalism. Kingsbury (2011), for example, points to the entanglement between people's enjoyment of, belief in and anxieties about national imaginations and the materiality and corporeality of experiencing this nation. Psychoanalytic geographies thus enhance my understanding of the way in which bodily feelings connect with discursive representations constituting national identities through promising enjoyment of these very identities (Müller 2013; Shaw, Powell, and De La Ossa 2014).

To sum up, I identify two problems with established accounts on the study of nationalism. First, with the exception of feminist and psychoanalytic geography's interventions, nationalism is often studied as a reified social phenomenon. Analyses often assume that institutions or elites exert influence on groups or that discursive systems of signification determine social practices. Scholars neglect the ways in which feelings of national belonging and alienation that engender and sustain national ideologies and nationalising practices emerge in the first place. Second, analyses of nationalism and of the becoming of communities of national belonging remain largely disembodied and immaterial. As studies are mainly focusing on the way nations emerge through state institutions (Billig 1995), as discursive formations (Calhoun 2007) or through other representational practices such as ethno-symbolism (A. D. Smith 2009), they overlook that these very institutions, discourses and cultural significations are embodied practices and materialities of communication and social interaction. After all, a national flag, independent from the meaning it may contain or that I may assign to it, simply remains a piece of cloth.

As most accounts on nationalism address the way in which national belonging is represented through language and institutions, what is beyond discourse (Frosh 1999) remains a black box. Yet, how do I get to draw my attention to something that makes my heart beat faster or my cheeks blush and what does it feel like to touch a flag? Apart from feminist and psychoanalytic geography's accounts to explore the embodied and emotional dimensions of nationalism that I have introduced above, the turn to affect (Leys 2011; Wetherell 2015) within contemporary social sciences and the humanities, and in particular also in human geography, offers an alternative way to capture the 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) dimensions of nationalism.

I thus both build on and expand (feminist) political and psychoanalytic geography's engagement with banal, everyday, embodied and emotional nationalisms by inquiring into the affective nature

of feeling national belonging. A focus on the affective dimension of nationalism serves to analyse the *emergence* of feelings of national belonging. As the thesis explores ways in which materially produced national representations affect different bodies, the following section reassesses different approaches to conceptualise and understand affect in order to develop an understanding of affect that enhances the study of nationalism. Prioritising neither affective nor discursive nor structural productions of worlds, I mainly follow recent advancements in feminist scholarship on affect that is emphasising the interrelatedness between emotional, bodily and material productions of everyday experiences.

## 2.4 Feminist theories of affect meet Lacanian psychoanalysis

> [1]**affect** /'afekt/ *n* **1** *psychology* the conscious subjective aspect of emotion or feeling considered apart from bodily changes **2** *obs* feeling, affection [(1) Ger *affekt*, fr L *affectus* (2) L *affectus*, fr *affectus*, pp]
>
> [2]**affect** /ə'fekt/ *vt* **1** to be given to; prefer ⟨~ *flashy clothes*⟩ ... **4** to tend towards ⟨*drops of water* ~ *roundness*⟩ **5** to be habitually found in
>
> [3]**affect** *vt* **1** to produce a material effect upon or alteration in ⟨*paralysis* ~ ed *his limbs*⟩ **2** to act on (eg a person or his/her mind or feelings) so as to bring about a response ⟨*was deeply* ~ ed *by the news*⟩ [L *affectus* pp]
>
> — *Longman Dictionary of the English Language, 1984*

Sara Ahmed (2004a, 117) asks: 'How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others?' - a key question to raise if I want to better understand the pervasiveness of national experience. For Ahmed, the notions of emotion and affect imply the same, for some others they do not (see for example Berlant 2011). In line with Ahmed (2004b), I conceptualise affect as both generic for encounters and conditions of embodiment as well as mediating and mediated through bodies. Being aware of the tensions between geographies of emotion and geographies of affect many observe within the discipline (cf. Colls 2012; Pile 2010; Wetherell 2012), I consider emotional and affective geographies not as separate but interlinked conceptual and methodological arguments (Bondi 2005b; Schurr 2014; Tolia-Kelly 2006; Waterton and Watson 2013). Concentrating on either of the terms then results from highlighting different aspects of affective and emotional being. The question is thus: How does affect work to unite and to separate different bodies? Whereas this section is not (yet) the place to answer this question, it is the place

to discuss the conceptual foundations of my concept of affective nationalism. I draw on two different strands of literature, feminist theory in combination with Spinozist-Deleuzian affect on the one hand and Lacanian psychoanalysis with a focus on his understanding of desire on the other hand. Both bodies of literature serve a particular purpose in my understanding of affective nationalism, as I am going to elaborate below. After explaining each, I delineate commonalities and complementarities that justify bringing both concepts into conversation for an analysis of affective nationalism.

### *Feminist theorisations of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect*

In referring to a combination of feminist theories with Spinozist-Deleuzian affect I mainly think of Sara Ahmed's, Rosi Braidotti's, Lauren Berlant's and Margaret Wetherell's contributions. It has mostly been their work that has inspired me in different, yet complementary ways, to think about nation and nationalism through lenses of affect. Four assumptions are crucial for my conceptualisation of affect: (1) affect results from transpersonal relations between bodies and objects; (2) different bodies and objects have different capacities to affect and be affected; (3) constant processes of becoming make for bodily encounter and thus affection; (4) affective relations organise bodies and objects across space and time. Let me explain each of these points.

First, in a Spinozist-Deleuzian understanding (Deleuze 1988; Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Hardt 2001; Massumi 2002; Spinoza 1883), *affection* as the process and *affect* as the result of corporeal encounters between bodies and objects are the forces that make for the emergence of more-than-human configurations. According to Benedict de Spinoza's philosophy, human bodies and nature are not separable. Different bodies and objects also do not exist a priori. Rather, 'the structure of a body is first defined by an equivalence: the power to act and exist corresponds to the power to be affected' (Hardt 2001, 380). Affect has no origin, but rather moves through bodies and thus defines encounters between objects and people. Different bodies and objects can only detect each other as affectable entities:

> I think, and as such I am active; I have an existence; this existence is only determinable in time as a passive self; I am therefore determined as a passive self that necessarily represents its own thinking activity to itself as an Other (Autre) that affects it (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 31–32).

Consequently, bodies and objects are not defined by their substance but by their encounters, by their 'capacities for affecting and being affected' (Deleuze 1988, 124). An encounter[1] then regulates different bodies and objects in contact with each other and marks the space and time of 'meaningful contact' between them (Mayblin et al. 2015; Valentine 2008). In fact, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987, 7) suggest an ontology of encounter as one of their philosophical principles wherein anything can connect to anything. A moment of affection has neither an end, nor a beginning, nor a specific spatiality, nor a temporality. It is rather intensity in and of itself. Bodies become existent in relationships to others whereupon affections and affect become crucial for their existence by moving between and through bodies (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Or as Sean Carter and Derek McCormack (2006, 234) put it, affect is 'a kind of vector of the intensity of encounter between bodies (non-human and human) of whatever scale and consistency.' Affect and affection are corporeal and bring bodies and objects into being. Affect and affection are preconditions to recognising bodies and objects in the first place and qualifying encounters between them.

Building on this Spinozist concept of body, Ahmed (2004c, 6) understands affect as a bodily capacity, an 'impression' a body makes and receives. She emphasises the way in which affect is first and foremost a bodily experience that is not inherent to a body or an object but is being activated in encounters with different bodies and objects – affects 'circulate' between different bodies and 'stick to some objects, and slide over others' (Ahmed 2004c, 8). This notion is crucial to Ahmed's (2004a) understanding of affect, as it accounts for its force. If I conceptualised affect as a body's property rather than a body's capacity, this would not put bodies into contact or set them apart. In fact, as Ahmed (2004a, 128) puts it, 'it is the very failure of affect to be located in a subject or object that allows it to generate the surfaces of collective bodies', such as the body of a nation. It is then the circulation of national affects between different bodies and objects that engenders feelings of national belonging and alienation and connects some bodies and objects while disconnecting others. As affect moves between bodies and objects, bodies and objects become constitutive not only of and in affective encounter but constitutive through affects in the first place.

Second, feminist scholars in particular have called attention to the ways in which 'different bodies hav[e] different affective capacities' (Tolia-Kelly 2006, 213) to affect or to be affected. 'Through their racialized, gendered and sexualized markedness' (p. 215), every body is its 'own peculiar conjuncture of history, gender, ethnicity, age and education' (Waterton 2013, 77). Ahmed stresses

[1] See Wilson (2016) for a comprehensive discussion on different conceptualisations and uses of the term *encounter* in human geography.

how affects are to a certain extent unpredictable and differ in their quality as a bodily capacity: 'to be affected by another does not mean that an affect simply passes or "leaps" from one body to another. The affect becomes an object *only given the contingency of how we are affected*' (Ahmed 2010, 39 emphasis in original). Past encounters shape this contingency to affect and to be affected. 'Hence "what sticks" is bound up with the "absent presence" of historicity' (Ahmed 2004c, 45). Despite different biographies and perceptions, the power of affective nationalism lies in its ability to enrol people into reproducing specific national practices. Affect becomes a powerful tool for the manipulation of political agendas because it relies on the unpredictable, yet ordinary contact between historicised bodies and objects (Sharp 2009; Thrift 2004; Waterton and Watson 2013). In affective encounters, difference becomes a central condition for the integration of bodies and objects into collectives (Ahmed 2004b). Fortier (2010, 22) describes this potential to fuse different bodies together as 'governing through affect'. Her notion of affective governance shows the ways in which socio-political agendas mark site-specific behaviour and feelings as more or less desirable making people 'as *citizens*, [...] *direct their feelings towards* the public' (ibid., 25 emphasis in original) in a certain way.

Third, conceptualising 'each individual [body and object as] an infinite multiplicity' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 254), the idea of 'becoming' is central to a Spinozist-Deleuzian notion of affect. Following Braidotti's (2011) interpretation of this Deleuzian idea of becoming allows understanding the ways in which bodies with different affective capacities get stimulated to melt into feelings of sharing and collectivity. While subject positions – as different modes of being – develop from bodily becomings, differences between them are immanent to their materialisation (Braidotti 2003). In the moment in which bodies, objects or places meet and resonate with each other bodily histories, such as past experiences, are activated as well. Affecting, being affected and making sense of lived experiences such as in ascribing meaning to bodies or practices then happens at the same time as a form of 'Gleichzeitigkeit', as Benedikt Korf (2012, 155) points out.

Bodily differences are tied to processes of affective becoming as moments of encounter generate, activate and alter bodies, objects and places. Processes of bodily becomings thus combine the contingency of experiences with bodily histories constituting the acting subject (Korf 2012, 158). By asserting that 'history and belonging [are] tattooed on your body' (Braidotti 2011, 11), Braidotti stresses the ways in which bodily markedness – as sexual, racial, generational, ethnic, national, socio-economic and political – is immanent to becomings and thus to moments of affective encounter. She claims that the locations from where bodies become – that means the spatial and temporal moments of origin of one's bodily becomings – remain attached to lived experiences and

embodied practices. For these bodily becomings it matters whether I have spent my childhood in a region distressed by violence and war, whether I have been raised in a mansion, whether I live in one language or in multiple languages or whether I am being identified as female, male, white or black in a certain spatial-temporal condition. It thus also matters which banal objects and processes constituting nation, such as license plates, history textbooks or evening news weather maps, circulate in my everyday life and which remain absent.

Elizabeth Grosz (1995) explains how becoming implies what moments of affection yield. Becoming, as the moment of encounter between different bodies and objects, suggests always 'becoming something' (Grosz 1995, 184). Becoming is thus neither being a body nor an object, nor the development of becoming a body or an object. Rather, becoming suggests to experience (re)connections in more or less intense modes. Differences between bodies and objects then become questions of connecting and disconnecting in moments of bodily encounters producing proximity and distance. Bodies are not black, white, Azerbaijani, German, woman or man but always all of this or none at the same time. It is a question of 'what we invest ourselves in' (Grosz 1995, 184) and how people live blackness, whiteness, Azerbaijaniness, Germanness, femaleness or maleness.

As a consequence, difference between bodies, for example as in different capacities to stimulate or to get stimulated by a national sign such as the sound of an anthem or a national emblem, characterise moments of becoming in affective encounter. Difference is the moment of becoming *per se* rooted in its own genealogy of lived, bodily experience and always interconnected in conditions of encounter (Braidotti 2011, 112).

Fourth, Berlant in particular deploys affect as an organising structure of what feels usual and of what to expect or to not expect. Bodies experience themselves, life, relationships and feelings in affective settings within which they 'are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmospheres in which they find themselves' (Berlant 2011, 15). Affect then marks processes of continuously structuring visceral experiences while unfolding less as a structure as such. In fact, affect exceeds and pervades structures, bodies, practices and feelings. Affect rather evolves as the 'residue of a collective experience that mediates being historical with conditions of potentiality' (Berlant 2008, 314). Inexplicable feelings of national belonging or alienation unfold as such kind of surplus beyond the idea of nation marking a collective experience. That means that even though people might experience national belonging or alienation through the continuous enactment of national myths in everyday life – such as in remembering the birthday of a national

heroine –, the contingency of bodily encounters carries potential to constantly redefine national ideology and thus also to experience the commemoration of a national hero in a different way.

In contrast to Ahmed, Berlant's (2011) understanding of affect rests on its fundamental distinction from emotion. Emotions, in Berlant's reading, emerge as potentially deceptive representations of bodily reactions and thus as that what people do and what I see other people doing. Affect, by contrast, cannot deceive and cannot be deceived – it just happens. While Berlant questions affect's significance to reveal anything at all about the world, as it remains the writer/speaker/thinker/performer who is making sense of bodily encounters as an emotional state of world experience rather than an affective, she still observes an 'affective manifestation' (ibid., 58) as in 'affectively laden gestures' (ibid., 201) for example. It is in particular these affectively laden gestures that prove the relevance of attending to affect in examining feelings of national belonging and alienation. They point to moments when a chime catches your attention through sounding like home, when a flavour titillating your palate tastes like the unfamiliar familiar spice of an exotic travel destination or when a TV program broadcasts ever returning images of a desired national womanhood. But how do corporeal movements and encounters become affectively laden gestures?

An understanding of affect as 'embodied, emotional social action' (Wetherell 2012, 75) links processes of meaning-making with the contingency, corporeality and materiality of affective encounters in organising experiences of the world. Wetherell in particular points to the ways in which discourses and processes of signification are involved in and co-constitutive of affective encounters. Affect constitutes bodies as it works through bodies as vehicles of organising the social.

> Affect is always 'turned on' and 'simmering', moving along, since social action is continually embodied. But, affect also comes in and out of focus. The ongoing flow of affective activity can take shape as a particular kind of affective performance, episode or occasion, as in, for instance, a child's tantrum, a self-aggrandising narrative, or a bounded experience of joy (Wetherell 2012, 12).

Such an understanding of social experience, being and bodily becoming merges discursive practices with embodiment. In fact, Wetherell questions the benefit of distinguishing immateriality such as language and representation from materiality and corporeality. Moments of bodily encounters, bodily becomings and meaning-making are, for her, the same thing, as affect is in and of itself relational. Wetherell (2012, 19) describes the situatedness and embeddedness of embodied affect in the social world an 'affective practice.' Her notion of affective practice is crucial for me to understand the ways in which representations of what comes to be identified as nation affect different bodies in different ways and to different degrees. It is through these affective practices

that bodies and objects connect and disconnect. Yet, 'affect is not random. It's nature and display are shaped by [bodies'] broader activities, determined by the unfolding sequences in which it is embedded' (Wetherell 2012, 81). A practice is affective through positioning different bodies and objects in space and time. It makes and remakes the context and norms of experience and becoming in moments of affective encounter – an affective practice is, in fact, social interaction.

In collaboration with Alex McConville, Tim McCreanor and others (2014; 2015), Wetherell exemplifies these ways in which affect as a practice organises different subject positions across national spaces. In a research project analysing print media coverage on the celebration of New Zealand's national holiday, *Waitangi Day*, newspaper headlines evoking 'affective-discursive position[s]' (McConville et al. 2014, 138) of, for example, courage or felt supremacy, hail a particular audience, which identifies with specific narratives of the nation's genesis prioritising the white settler society while disdaining *Māori* people. The choice of language and words used to shape particular debates around competing national ideologies co-constitutes experiences of nation. Or, as Wetherell et al. (2015, 62) argue, 'the affective-discursive practices set up by contemporary news media continue to "settle" national space through their very particular formulations of the emotional character, proximity and distance of the groups populating Aotearoa New Zealand, reinforcing established patterns of privilege and disadvantage'. Hence, these affective-discursive practices establish the conditions upon which bodies, objects, places and practices belong to a national community or do not belong.

## *Lacanian psychoanalysis and the idea of desire*

While feminist perspectives on Spinozist-Deleuzian affect help understanding the ways in which national bodies and objects with different affective capacities emerge in the first place and constitute encounters engendering feelings of national belonging and alienation, explanations on the contingency and potentiality of these bodily encounters remain vague. I am aware that it is precisely these 'metaphysics of potentialities' (Müller and Schurr 2016, 220) that make up for the charm and the popularity of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect theory. Yet, in order to better understand the continuous enactment of feelings of national belonging and alienation, a philosophy of affirmation and possibilities does not suffice. Indeed, experiences of contradiction and incapacity, materialising through the site of the body, drive the perpetuation of nationalism.

I thus suggest to also draw on Lacanian psychoanalysis in thinking about nationalism as affective. In addition to comprehend – through feminist readings of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect – the ways in which bodies, objects and places with different capacities to affect and to be affected emerge

and engender representations of nation, Jacques Lacan's system of thought encourages to attend to the deficiencies marking these national experiences. Processes of national identification in particular unfold through experiences of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. Let me briefly explain in what ways an inherent lack engenders any national experience.

Following Yannis Stavrakakis and Nikos Chrysoloras (2006), momentary national experiences feel as if past identifications with the nation have fulfilled what they had promised. While a sense of contentedness, such as when a national athlete had won the Olympic gold medal, characterises past imaginations about the nation, the present felt experience of the nation lacks this sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. Indeed, momentary national experiences leave much to be desired, as if the enjoyment in identifying with the nation got lost in the past. Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras (ibid.,153) put this as follows:

> Romantic nationalist histories are often based on the supposition of a golden era [...]. During this imaginary period, which we could call "original state", the nation was prosperous and happy. However, this original state of innocence was destroyed by an evil "Other", someone who deprived the nation of its enjoyment.

It is precisely this lost enjoyment characterising national experiences that unfolds as a constitutive lack stimulating the recurring emergence of national fantasies through relations of desire. I propose to turn to the Lacanian idea of desire in order to explore the ways in which feelings of national attachment and praise survive in moments the failure of the idea of a coherent and distinctive nation is obvious. In the end, the impossibility to fully regain the lost enjoyment of materially reproduced representations of the nation continuously spur relations of desire generating fantasies of an appealing and distinct sense of nation.

I take inspiration from Lacanian psychoanalytic ideas, as they tie in with my poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity: subjectivity is not the cause or given condition of knowledge production; rather, in Lacanian psychoanalysis the subject emerges within social interaction and is essentially 'structured around [...] a radical lack' (Stavrakakis 2008, 1041). Lacanian psychoanalysis thus renders what behavioural geographers would have called 'the "black box" of the human mind' (Pile 1996, 40, quotation in original), obsolete by dissolving the clear boundary between the sense for an individual, a personal body and its social and material surroundings. Psychoanalysis reveals the ways in which 'processes of identification and subjectivitiy necessarily place the subject as an alienated yet embodied, embedded, and continuing process of struggle with and within the social world' (Thomas 2007, 537).

Most people think of nationality and national identification as two examples of the ways in which people get placed and place other people in the world. It is difficult to unthink, yet, it is not my sense of self that makes a conscious and independent decision about my national identity. Rather, the relations this sense of self is constituted and embedded in influence the ways in which I feel I make sense of myself and the world. In fact, following Lacan (2014, 88), the body does not exist autonomously from its environment. On the contrary, what feels self, own, or inside, and what feels other, alien, or outside, mutually constitute each other. The ideas of the personal body and a sense of self, through embodying, thinking, doing or speaking, are inextricably enmeshed with processes of signification beyond a person's control. Lacan (2006, 279) expresses this as follows:

> Symbols in fact envelop the life of man [sic] with a network so total that they join together those who engender him [...]; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade [...]; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment.

I might feel affirmative about the fact that I see myself, for example, while looking in a mirror. I see myself in the moment I connect the sight of this organic aggregation commonly referred to as the human body with ideas I have of my phenotypical appearance. The perception of the self seems clearly separable from and featuring specific characteristics different or similiar to what else there is surrounding me – may it be people, objects, places or dry air. But this perception of the self is deceptive in what I sense as my own, autonomously existing body and misleads me by producing a separation between thinking and embodying and between myself and others.

Drawing on Lacan, I suggest to focus on the ways in which desire regulates processes of identification and differentiation. It is not just the idea of lack, which is central to understand the formation of subjectivities through desire. Indeed, the consideration that 'the subject in question is not that of the reflexive consciousness, but that of desire' (Lacan 1998, 89) suggests that desire plays a pivotal role. Both desire and lack constitute the subject. Relations of desire govern how I wish to be seen by others, as it is my incomplete sense of self 'in which [I] the subject experience [my]self as desire' (Lacan 1998, 265). I thus comprehend desire as a relation in itself. Desire is a mechanism engendering and governing interactions between bodies and objects. It is not something to possess or not to possess, to obtain or to dispose of. Desire, rather, is best described as 'an ambivalent energy organized by processes of attachment' (Berlant 2012, 88). As a dynamic that binds bodies, objects and places and invests attachments between the felt experience of the self and the other, desire functions as the impetus of processes of identification. Yet, inherently

inaccessible and unrealisable, desire induces the relations between bodies and objects as a constituent shaping the connectivity between them.

### *Joining forces: feminist accounts of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect and Lacanian desire*

Deleuze was a philosopher and Lacan was a clinical psychoanalyst. This fundamental disciplinary difference between them indicates that they work within different scientific paradigms, epistemologies and methodologies. While I understand scholars who would reject or at least question drawing on the ideas of both, I suggest that even though the concepts of affect and desire are not the same, they serve a complementary purpose. Both affect and desire contribute to the formation of bodily encounters that spark feelings of national belonging and alienation. While Spinozist-Deleuzian affect helps to explain how bodies, objects and places emerge in the first place, the Lacanian idea of desire addresses the ways in which these emerging bodies, objects and places connect with and through national ideologies. Combining the operations of affect and desire allows to disentangle the ways in which moments of bodily encounter affirm feelings of national belonging and alienation. I argue that feminist accounts of affect and Lacan's desire share four commonalities that justify integrating both of them in my conceptualisation of affective nationalism.

First, affect theorisations as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis understand bodies as emerging from relations with other bodies and objects. Both concepts disqualify a binary logic that creates false dichotomies between body/mind or inside/outside. Bodies are neither pre-existent nor organically bounded, but a momentary experience of embeddedness in the world.

Following from this, the second commonality between affect and desire marks the ways in which both notions are involved in connecting different bodies and objects. Affect drives moments of encounter between different bodies and objects as a force connecting and disconnecting elements. Likewise, the psychoanalytic subject cannot be imagined outside its connection to the Other in form of the law and language, for example, and desire conditions this link between senses of self and other.

Third, the concepts of affect and desire both engage the idea that the past is always present in the presence of encountering bodies and objects. Moments of affective encounter amplify the felt presence of national belonging or alienation. Affect puts bodies into contact with each other or sets them apart by activating past experiences and bodily histories. Similar to this activation of bodily histories in moments of affective encounter, the idea of previousness is inherent to the functioning of desire. Desire is historical in its relation to fantasy. The fantasy of national glory

implicating national ideologies, memories and a genealogy of historic events maintains desire. It is only, however, in relations between bodies, for example as a sense of self and of other, that these historic fantasies become relevant in the encounter.

A sense of potentiality is the fourth commonality between affect and desire. Based on the premise that nothing precedes a bodily encounter, any affective encounter shows the capacity to develop into something new. In the same way, the fundamental lack in defining the psychoanalytic subject and the world that it is embedded in leaves room for the unexpected and for change.

I would like to conclude this section by considering in some more depth Berlant's work, an American scholar of literature, who is developing her own understandings of affect and desire taking inspirations from, among others, both Deleuze and Lacan. She records the relationship between desire and affect as follows: 'an object of desire is not only a thing, scene, or person, but an affect: the affect associated with the pleasure of binding or attachment itself' (Berlant 2008, 266). For affective nationalism this means that it *can* feel good to feel attached to a national community. This feel-goodism about a national community *can* stimulate the desire for national belonging and emerges as such as an affect. Nonetheless, precisely because of the situatedness of bodily contact and since different bodies have different affective capacities that get activated in moments of encounter, this affect of desiring feel-good attachment to a national community can likewise pass by unnoticed, trigger pain or feelings of exclusion.

## 2.5 The concept of affective nationalism

In this final section I bring together all the different conceptual strands which I have discussed at length above for my conceptualisation of nationalism as affective. In my understanding, affective nationalism is the quotidian emergence of the national through momentary encounters of bodies and objects. Following Ben Anderson (2014, 17) in recognising that 'affect is simultaneously [a] [...] bodily capacity and collective condition,' nationalism is affective through embodying nationhood, through attaching and detaching different bodies and objects, through creating senses of sharing and not sharing national memories, histories and routines, as well as through desiring national distinction. My basic argument is that national sentiments arise through a specific configuration of elements that stimulate the emergence of certain feelings and practices. Through this configuration of elements, different bodily histories become relevant in moments of affection and enable feelings of proximity and distance. This embodied becoming of national meaning connects different bodies with multiple capacities to affect and to be affected through sentiments of belonging and alienation.

How does such an understanding of affect advance conceptualisations of nationalism as affective? The empirical study of this thesis will form one important part of an answer to this question. Here, I shall initially only consider the theoretical benefits. Affect as a transpersonal, bodily capacity triggers the contingent combination of bodily experiences to generate something new. Reconstructing moments of affection allows me to show, for example, the ways in which places inspire the rise of bodily sentiments to feel included or excluded at national heritage sites or national monuments. The way in which what is identified as a national heritage site is being represented through specific arrangements of objects, fabric, colour and patterns aims at communicating what counts as national and deserves particular attention and protection. As a consequence, the deliberately manufactured bodily encounters between places, objects, memories, and visitors incite feelings of belonging in some, whereas it may evoke feelings of exclusion in others (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Waterton 2013). For Peter Merriman and Rhys Jones (2016) the affectivity of material infrastructures such as bridges and roads emerges as a key element in the constitution of national spaces. They argue that,

> national feelings, expressions, sentiments, affects and spaces, then, appear to take hold through the emergence of relational configurations resembling the flickering of fire, affecting some bodies but not others, being present in some configurations but not others, and appearing 'hot' and contentious for some or burning invisible for others (Merriman and Jones 2016, 6).

The phenomenon I refer to as nationalism thus does not simply pre-exist but becomes relevant as a mixture of feelings comprising positions of proximity and distance in moments of affective encounter between different bodies and objects. Instead of solely concentrating on the banal, embodied and emotional elements of national identification, my concept of affective nationalism enables me to follow the processes that effect feelings of national belonging and alienation as a continuous flow connecting and disconnecting different bodies and objects. Visceral experiences such as preparing and eating traditional dishes, dancing and dressing mark this affective becoming of bodies and objects.

In addition, recognizing that 'any encounter contains reference to past encounters' (Ben Anderson 2014, 82) allows me to understand the ways in which moments of affective encounter might infuse various bodies with disparate affective capacities to feel a sense of national collectivity. Jason Dittmer (2014) argues that communities emerge as the aggregation of individual bodies, such as when the nation as a whole feels shocked by systematic rapes of women (Mayer 2004). A shared feeling of national belonging also works, for example, through gesticulating in a specific manner in

a certain place, at a certain time with a certain arrangement of bodies and objects (Darling 2010) or through putting on a uniform (Adey 2011). Such affective practices, which I understand as bodily articulations sparked by stimulating resonance with surrounding bodies, objects, and places involved in affective encounter, effect a shared sense of national belonging. The moments of affective becoming trigger negative as well as positive feelings depending on the bodily histories they stimulate. Tingling with excitement when expecting the final score of an international football match, for example, conveys ways in which the enjoyment of what feels national anticipates feelings of satisfaction and aversion or menace at the same time (Kingsbury 2008; Proudfoot 2010).

Furthermore, focusing on the becoming of national bodies, objects and places reveals how the unpredictability of affective encounter (re)produces nationalist sentiments. The illusion of the nation unfolds in situational configurations of different bodies, objects, places and memories. Volatile and unexpected encounters constitute processes of becoming of national bodies and the rise of feelings for the nation. Natural or social catastrophes such as an earthquake or war, for example, put the inviolability of national bodies and territories at risk. Corporeal encounters with the disaster fuel feelings of threat and a sense of alignment with the imagined national community. Television pictures illustrating the catastrophe collide with corporeal histories, the voice of the journalist, the sight of a face filled with fear and thoughts circling around questions about one's own vulnerability and incite sentiments of attachment to intimate bodies constituting the nation. Even struggling to resist practices or feelings of national connection, we cannot help but reinforcing them at the same time. Appreciating the contextual eruption and immanent differentiation of bodily becomings then allows me to conceptualise nationalism as powerful moments of affective encounter that enable the alignment of different people, places and objects with feelings of national belonging and alienation. Turning to the affective moments of national identification uncovers ways in which the persistence of nationalism is due to its potential to unify people in certain situations despite individual experiences and bodily histories.

Besides, as 'distinct ways of organizing the "feeling of existence"' (Ben Anderson 2015, 2) affect assembles, disassembles and reassembles bodies and objects in space and time. It is the seeming naturalness and implicitness of practices, values and sentiments constituting an 'intimate public' (Berlant 2008) of the nation that makes affectivity of nationalism an intriguing perspective to study. By establishing seemingly natural links between national politics and family homes for example (Caluya 2011), political affect favours some bodies, objects and practices over others and thus allocates bodies and objects differently within and outside national space. Communities of sharing emerge through and as 'national affective atmospheres' (Stephens 2016, 3), as a combination of

large-scale and small-scale socio-political and cultural practices, feelings and affects. Affect thus engineers different experiences of place that make people stay or leave national spaces and feel like an outsider or an insider to a nation. As experiences of place and the way national spaces feel like change over people's life courses (Kobayashi, Preston, and Murnaghan 2011), affective relations constantly redefine feelings of national belonging and alienation.

Ultimately, experiencing feelings of belonging to a national community discloses the ways in which identification with the nation unfolds as 'the desire of each generation to try and heal [the] (metaphoric) [national] castration in order to give back to the nation its lost full enjoyment' (Stavrakakis 2008, 1054). National fantasies in the form of, for example, Russian cyber-brides that help Western men in salvaging their masculinity (Klinke 2016) or the racially exclusive national imaginary of a white European Australia (Hage 2003) sustain those desires to regain what is being imagined as having been lost as *the* glorious national past. Through sharing those fantasies, the enjoyment of the 'Nation-Thing' (Žižek 1993, 201) and practices of eliding groups of people that (potentially) contaminate purified national spaces (Sibley 1999), national desires engender senses of exclusive communities. While different bodies connect with objects, practices, routines and values through bodily encounters, the sphere of affective normativity that emerges through those encounters is fundamentally shaped by the desire for belonging to a community such as the national community and by the desire that this community is singular and thus legitimate.

To conclude, my core interest in studying affective nationalism lies in detecting ways in which feelings of national belonging and alienation emerge from moments of encounter between different bodies and objects. What I eventually suggest with my concept of an affective nationalism is not to disregard the rich, pioneering and important literature on nationalism that I have consulted in the beginning of the chapter. I simply encourage nationalist scholars to shift the focus. I propose to turn away from an analysis of what national symbols and practices convey or of who or what changes national discourses towards a research that investigates different ways in which national symbols emerge, what a national flag does, what discursive and material representations of nations feel like and in what ways encounters with representations of nations connect and disconnect different people.

Drawing on ethnographic material from Azerbaijan, I explore ways in which moments of affection stimulate feelings of national belonging and alienation through processes of embodying national feeling and meaning, orienting different bodies and objects across national space and time and binding different bodies, objects and places that engender national communities of shared feelings.

Through attending to relations of desire that constitute senses of national distinction I examine ways in which nationalism persists.

Hence, the ways in which nationalism is affective divides into four processes: embodying, orienting, binding and persisting (Figure 2). First of all, moments of affective encounter engender national bodies, objects and places. Yet, these emergent bodies, objects and places have different capacities to affect and to be affected as bodily histories and situatedness mark their moments of becoming. The second process of affective nationalism focuses on the moments of encounter that put these different bodies, objects and places in relation towards each other, attaching and detaching them.

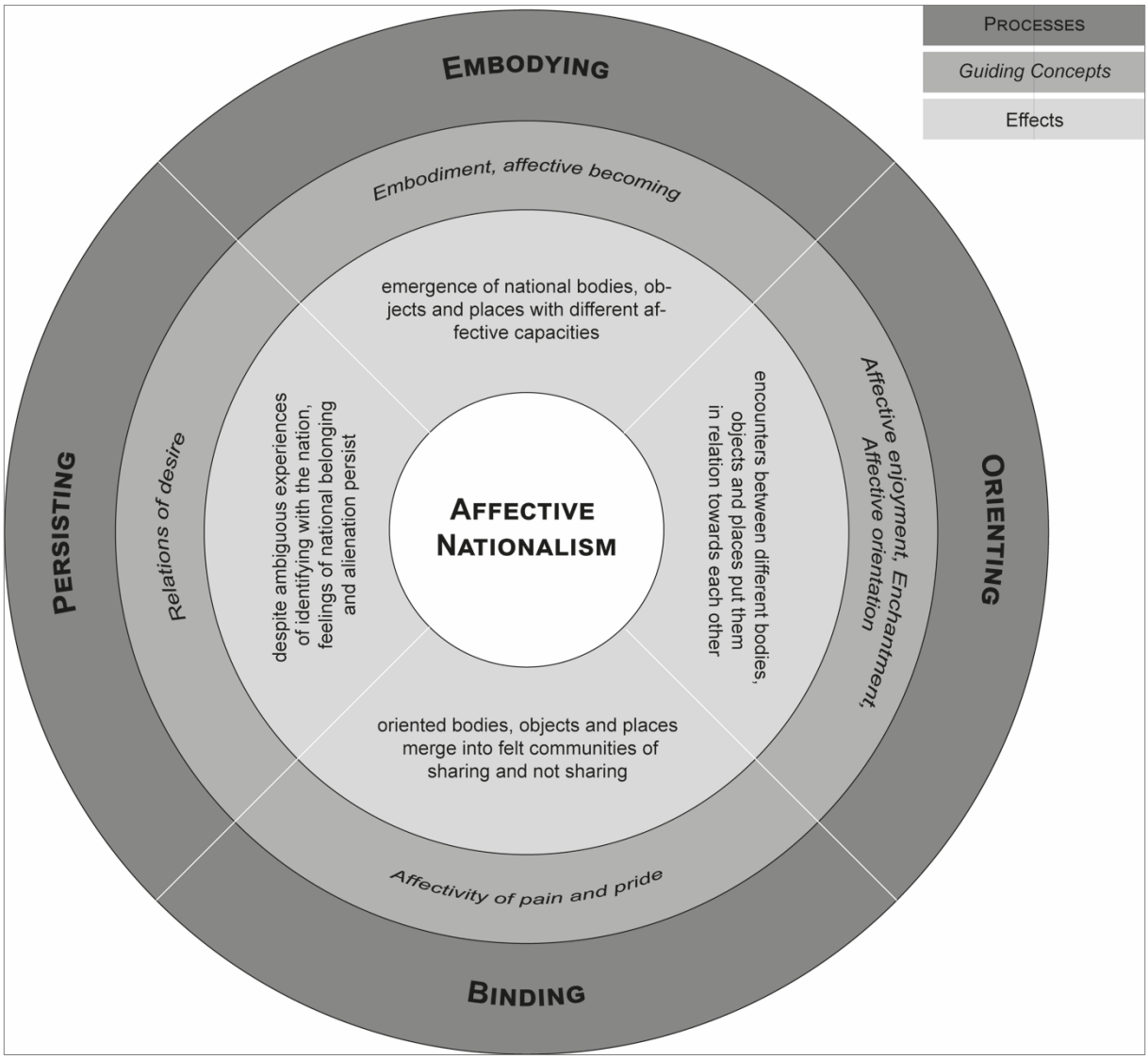


Figure 2: The four dimensions of affective nationalism

Rather than enquiring upon the *why* of national belonging and alienation, affective nationalism examines, in a third process, different ways in which these oriented bodies, objects and places with different attachments and detachments to national practices and sensations merge into felt communities of sharing and not sharing. Processes of binding different bodies, objects and places engender senses of national communities. The fourth process of affective nationalism, eventually, comprises all of the above in seeking to understand the ways in which nationalism persists. Despite the impossibilities of experiencing national fulfilment and the failures of becoming national, feelings of national belonging and alienation persist. Based on the constitutive lack of national identities, I suggest that relations of desire yield moments of national enjoyment.

As most of my empirical material explains one of these processes better than the others, I decided to organise the empirical analysis of affective nationalism in Azerbaijan along the division into these four processes. All of the four dimensions of affective nationalism, however, are at stake when I feel belonging by the sight of a national flag or remain completely unaware of a collective grief that connects people with a shared historical memory around me.

While I address the principles, possibilities and limits of an affective methodology in the next chapter (3), in chapter 4, I am interested in the ways in which different bodies, gestures and moments of corporeality become and engender national meaning-making. I show this through sharing my experiences of female dancing in Azerbaijan and through discussing ways in which moments of affective encounter produce senses of nationally desired corporeal beauty. In what ways, different orientations towards national objects connect and disconnect people based on routines, practices and positive and negative evaluation of things, is my central interest in chapter 5. I will discuss different ritualistic practices and holidays, such as *Novruz Bayramı*, the enchanting power of fire and the encounter with the smell of burned *üzərlik*, and examine the ways in which they engender senses of national belonging and alienation through becoming relevant in specific contexts of sense-making. The ways in which these contexts of sense-making create felt communities of sharing and not sharing is the main focus in chapter 6. In order to understand the ways in which the affectivities of pain and pride merge different bodies, objects and places, inducing senses of national collectivity, I share my experiences from two important commemoration events in Azerbaijan, 20 January (Black January) and Khojaly. I turn to an extensive analysis of the Lacanian idea of desire in chapter 7 in order to investigate the ways in which the (dis-)identification with Turkey and Turks renders identifications with the Azerbaijani nation enjoyable.

# 3 Experimenting with an affective methodology

I propose to study nationalism not as the given *precondition* of the experience of the contemporary world, but as a potential *outcome* of affective encounters. Following the conceptual understanding of affective nationalism, I have outlined in the previous chapter 2, affective encounters *produce* nationalism. Nationalism might, for example, emerge as feelings of proximity or distance to groups of people, to a certain type of food, a smell or a way of moving a hand while dancing in encounters between different bodies and objects. Nationalism might also unfold as bodily capacities to affect and to be affected by national representations such as a flag, the sound of an anthem or the collective remembrance of a historical event. All of these exemplary representations I have just mentioned do not exist as representations of the nation or even discrete artefacts, of course. Rather, bodies, objects or places become relevant or irrelevant as frames of national sense-making within everyday encounters and becomings.

Researching affective nationalism requires a methodology in line with the conceptual premises I have outlined. Any methodology of affective nationalism needs to attend to transpersonal relations constituting bodies and objects, to different capacities of bodies and objects to affect and to be affected, to constant processes of becoming that make for bodily encounter and thus affection, to affective relations organising bodies and objects in space and time and to relations of desire constituting senses of nation.

The aim of this chapter is to develop a methodology that suits the study of affective nationalism. At the beginning, I will set out four assumptions that guide explorations of an affective methodology. I then turn to explaining the technology of affective writing that I propose as a central method to make affective nationalism present and felt. I conclude the chapter by introducing the context and trajectories of my autoethnographic research in Azerbaijan.

## 3.1 Methodological assumptions

I often ask myself: What is reality? My education in human geography has trained me to remain wary of truths and objectivities and as such of anything that imposes itself as reality. Yet, I perceive myself as a human being that exists within social relations. My experiences of being immersed in the world feel real. So did my experiences of doing research in Azerbaijan: what I observed, touched and smelled, what people told me and what was written on Facebook felt and still feels existent

and ready to be analysed. Even if I understand reality as a product of affective practice, of bodily encounters inspiring, activating and doing things, I wonder to what extent I could and should collect examples, material and other bits and pieces, reviving and representing the felt reality of my research practice? If, as John Law (2004, 2) suggests, 'much of reality is ephemeral and elusive,' how can I account for the impermanence and fleetingness of my research experiences and encounters?

In order to answer these questions and to experience affective encounters that trigger nationalism, my methodology of choice is an autoethnographic account centring on affective experience (Moss 1999; Waterton and Dittmer 2014). Butz and Besio (2009, 1666) invite geographers to cultivate autoethnography as they consider 'personal experience narrative with its fine-grained focus on the researcher-self, and its method of blurring the distinctions among emotions, experience, representation and performance' well suited for geographic research on affect and emotion. Autoethnography understands the researcher as a central element in the process of producing knowledge, as this research methodology connects personal experiences with the social relations they are situated in (Taber 2010). According to Leon Anderson's (2006, 373) 'analytic autoethnography' a major component of doing autoethnographic research involves a reflection of the researcher's own bodily and emotional responses to what is happening. This means, for example, paying attention to irritating, pleasant as well as painful moments characterising the research experience. Autoethnography asks me to remain sensitive to the randomness and elusiveness of research interaction and to deliberately reflect upon my visceral, fleshly and emotional experiences in the research process. Autoethnography is well-suited to investigate the emergence and continuity of banal nationalisms as it heeds the embeddedness of nationalising practices in everyday life and respects that bodies have different capacities to affect and to be affected (Tolia-Kelly 2006), that means, the degrees to which encounters stimulate bodies and shape their emotional responses.

An affective methodology aims at eliciting affective experiences that 'give a sense of the process of becoming implicated in and faithful to the relations, movements and objects' (McCormack 2003, 503). Just as the feeling for a shared belonging to an imagined national community counts as a moment of affection, the processes of writing, reading and thinking about what has been written constitute a course of becoming (McCormack 2003). I thus understand the autoethnographic methodology I build on as a 'performative methodology' (Dewsbury 2010, 324; Dirksmeier and Helbrecht 2008, 1). As a consequence, the study of affective nationalism as a phenomenon and research object 'comes into being through being enacted in the practice of the research itself'

(Dewsbury 2010, 324). Research encounters such as between myself, people I meet and talk to, places I visit, materials I touch, scents I smell, memories crossing my mind and the gaze of a passer-by engender the research and are, as such, performative.

Conceptualising ethnography as a methodology instead of a method (Müller 2012) allows me to experiment with perspectives that place different bodies and objects, including myself, as producers and constituents of affective encounters and of affective nationalism. By engaging in what Nigel Thrift (2000a, 252) has called 'observant participation' in place of participant observation (Dewsbury 2010, 327), I blur the differentiation between my body as the observing body and other bodies as the bodies to be observed (Dirksmeier and Helbrecht 2008, 23). Like other bodies and objects constituting the animated environment I feel part of, my presence produces encounters, induces irritation and generates meaning. I am thus not participating less in bodily encounters than the people I meet and the objects I come across. Likewise, these bodies and objects also observe - me, for example. Identifying four assumptions guiding my research practice of investigating affective nationalism I suggest a methodology that moves beyond the attempt to merely reproduce and represent what interviewees have said, what documents state, what newspapers argue or what observational notes reflect. As Law (2004, 70) comments, 'method is productive of realities rather than merely reflecting them,' because not just language and texts produce various forms of knowledge, but also bodies, emotions, irritations and specific contexts. Most importantly, while understanding embodied experience as the central form of knowledge production, 'experience doesn't need to be coded to be appreciated and understood, it needs to be presented and treated as being just what it is' (Dewsbury 2010, 325).

### *Emancipating research material*

The first principle of an affective methodology releases the research material from classifications. Research material does not simply exist. Seeing a national flag flying in the wind on a stroll through a park, discussing ways of expressing religious belief with an informant or casually watching the news on TV become research material in moments of bodily encounters. I shy away from classifying research material into categories of importance, interpretability or representability. In fact, I suggest that the ways in which research material is packed, such as in form of a printed document, a brief thought or a recorded conversation, does not render the material more or less valuable. Research material, rather, depends on my, the researcher's, bodily capacities to affect and to be affected and on the academic narrative I intend to craft. Bodily encounters, feelings and

materialisations develop through their situated emergence and become research material through my making sense of them.

I am thus drawing on Brian Massumi (2002, 17) who has suggested to focus on the performance and the capabilities of empirical material instead of on '[applying] a concept'. The category of nation emerges in the moment of lived experience through affect and thus through meaningful bodily contact, such as when I make sense of something that catches my attention as a corporeal gesture, a smell or a sound. My bodily capacities to affect and to be affected actively connect and disconnect different bodies and objects. My bodily capacities are thus shaping affective encounters and yield affective nationalism through producing interpretations and constructing plausibility. 'To write [...] about a research subject is always, inevitably, to translate' (Vannini 2015a, 10) and, as a consequence, to create.

### *Putting research bodies and objects in place*

Following Donna Haraway's (1988) reminder of the embodied situatedness of knowledge production, I consider the researcher's flaws, perception limits, empathic capacities, potentials to affect and to be affected as well as bodily presences and absences as crucial elements in researching affective nationalism. My biography, past experiences and bodily histories influence to whom I talk to, what I document and what irritates me or what or who I irritate. I, for example, can only integrate elements in my narrative that my body was open to experience in a way that allows me to reflect on it.

My methodological approach has thus opted to employ the body – rather than texts – as an essential research instrument (Longhurst, Ho, and Johnston 2008). As John-David Dewsbury (2010, 327) puts it, I use my 'body directly in the field as a recording machine itself'. My goal is to experience what affects me and what I affect and to aim at 'presencing' the results; that means, to render the affections in certain situations able to be experienced (Müller 2015, 411). As a methodological consequence, I conceptualise the various bodies of myself as a researcher (for example the physical body, a gesture or thoughts) and their affective capacities as generative elements of affective encounters (Bondi 2005a). Hence, my empathic capacities (Bondi 2014; B. Jones and Ficklin 2012), emotional entanglements (Lobo 2010; Schurr and Abdo 2016), and reflexivity (Rose 1997) shape the research material generated within the research process.

I feel that my body, which has often been marked as female, heterosexual, unmarried and German-European, boosted as well as restrained research encounters and shaped the relationships between

me and my informants, specific objects and certain places. Heidi Kaspar and Sara Landolt (2016) and Caroline Faria and Sharlene Mollet (2016) emphasise, for example, the ways in which the sexualisation and racialisation of researching and researched bodies fundamentally shape knowledge productions. I remember one situation, for instance, when a good friend of one of my main informants moved closer to me while we were both sitting on a sofa in a small room. We were seven people in the room, sitting on outworn sofas, armchairs and stools around a small glass table carrying our emptied soup plates and breadcrumbs. It was past ten in the evening and my cell phone on the table silently recorded our conversations on Azerbaijani-Turkish relationships, Turkish nationalism and the prospects of the political opposition that already had been going on for more than two hours. A few seconds after the guy had moved closer to me, he put his right arm around me. Even though I felt uncomfortable, I stayed seated. Yet, stiffened and with my arms folded. There was no other place to move. I was worried to destroy the intimate atmosphere of the group's discussion if I would disapprove of the young men coming closer. Instead, I pretended to not having realised anything that would change the relational dynamic of bodies within the room. In order to protect my position as a trustworthy friend in the group I mislead the young men sitting next to me by hiding my aversion towards his corporeal closeness. I thus 'played an active role in the normalisation of gendered and sexualised practices that objectify women's bodies [...] for the sake of data collection' (Kaspar and Landolt 2016, 115).

Similar to the way bodies are sexualised in moments of encounter, the racialisation of bodies shapes affective research practice. One of my informants, a 23-year old woman from the suburbs of Baku, once told me how much she adored my skin. She touched my arm and told me that my skin was very beautiful, as it had the colour of peach. I was surprised. I had neither thought about my skin colour as being beautiful nor as having the colour of peach. I asked her if she thought that her skin colour would not have the colour of peach. I felt we had the same skin colour. We were both white. She would hold her arm next to mine in order to compare colours and would conclude that mine was peach whereas hers was yellow. Arriving at that conclusion made her frown at her yellow arm skin. I, on the contrary, felt at the same time flattered and awkward by her praising my skin. Initially, I dismissed this moment during my field research as irrelevant. Yet, revisiting my notes almost two years later, I realised that 'whiteness [...] as a structural advantage' (Faria and Mollett 2016, 81) characterises almost all of my research encounters, granting me trust and intimate access to people and communities.

Apart from the ways bodies and objects interfere with affective relations, places, too, 'discharge' (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 4) stimulations. Thus, the places of the research and the presence of the

researchers' various bodies shape the research narrative. This begs the question of whether the inevitability of different bodily capacities to affect and be affected makes researching affect impossible. In the case of my research, my bodily capacities to affect and to be affected influenced what and whom I encountered in the first place. At the same time as this facilitated contact and participation in family lives and political (youth) groups, it prevented encounters with other people, objects and places. These affective becomings remain untold because researching affective nationalism is predicated on bodily capacities.

### *Diversifying research methods*

Researching affect focuses on doing, experiencing and experimenting (Dewsbury 2010). I have thus deployed a variety of different research methods that constitute my autoethnographic research experience. The methods I have applied in the field range from semi-structured interviews to filming or recording a public event for a few minutes and allowing what is happening around me exert an influence on me on an ordinary day in a café. In general, I am following Nick Megoran (2006), who has suggested to examine people's everyday experiences as valuable research practice in political geography. I thus accompanied people running errands, lived with families and spent much time in public among and with other people.

In diversifying my research methods, I took inspirations from feminist geographers who have, in particular, contributed methodological accounts recognising the embodied places of knowledge production. They have put forward video recordings (Schurr 2013b), autobiographical reflections about emotional responses (S. H. Smith 2016; Watson 2012), and psychoanalytic methodologies (Bondi 2014) as methodological tools to access body language and feelings for analysis. For Hayden Lorimer (2005, 89 emphasis in original), research on affect needs to be able to yield the 'thickest, anatomical descriptions of *doing*.' Those illustrations cannot reproduce the experience. They can, however, help to pave the way to the reader's, observer's or listener's mind (Bondi 2005b).

Central to me is thus the question of *how* I engage with a specific method and not *what* method I choose. The place and time I choose to meet a person for an interview for example, if I stick to my interview guidelines and the questions I have thought through beforehand or not, if I openly declare that I am conducting an interview with the person or if I am just chitchatting with somebody on a walk through the park, if I listen carefully to things my conversational partner mentions or if I am less attentive or if I am (less) obsessed with the wish to hear a particular statement; all these aspects shape my research encounters and what I identify as my research material. I, for example, have remained unsatisfied and unconvinced with the five interviews I had

with prominent oppositionists. But even if they did not push me towards a better understanding of the ways in which national detachment and attachment work, they helped me in aligning myself with different people, to build bonds of trust and interest and maybe I just went to talk to these people to signal to other informants: 'See, I am on your side!' In fact, some of my informants asked me with whom I had met or was planning on meeting. I cannot, however, remember that anybody ever asked me what some of the other people I had met had actually said.

### *Accepting research failures*

Eventually, an affective methodology asks me to face the limits of researching affective nationalism. Is it possible to analyse what is felt, often beyond the reach of my known way of communication? In what ways do I research something intangible like affect? How can I allow nationalism to emerge from moments of affective encounter without presupposing it as a category I inevitably use to make sense of my lived experience? In experimenting with an affective methodology I do not answer these questions. I rather indulge in 'view[ing] the impossibility of empirical research as a creative opportunity (rather than a damning condition), to unsettle the systematicity of procedure, to re-configure (rather than mimic) the lifeworld, and in sum to learn to fail' (Vannini 2015b, 319). Certainly, withdrawing from the quest to engage in a research practice that reproduces material and structures the data analysis in an academically accepted and expected way is more easily said than done. Hence, I continue to learn to '[t]ry again. Fail again. Fail better' (Beckett 2014, 89).

## 3.2 Affective writing

One method that is central to my investigations of affective nationalism is the practice of what I call affective writing. I do not write about affect, but *through* and *with* affect. Affect produces nationalism as I have stated at the beginning of this chapter and outlined in detail in chapter 2. I write about my experiences and feelings during my times in Azerbaijan. Even though I do not write about affect directly, it is present in (not) affecting encountering bodies, such as the reader, the text, the imagination of the writer emerging through the momentary encounter with the text, memories, the short yet repetitive presences of a headache, the distraction through the vibrating phone on the desk, an office mate watering plants, the feeling of needing to go for a pee, the thought about meeting a friend for dinner..... and still, recurring, because we are reading, you are reading, I am reading, the encounter with the text, the words, the alignments of words that RESONATE. The aim of affective writing is then 'to resonate rather than validate' (Vannini 2015a, 15).

To allow the reader an experience of the affective encounters producing feelings of national belonging and alienation I have composed texts in the style of vignettes. By means of writing the vignettes in a style that differs from those paragraphs I do not label as vignettes I intend to evoke an eureka moment with the reader. I want to increase the reader's affective capacities through a way of writing that stimulates the emergence of affective nationalism through encounters with the written outputs of my research in Azerbaijan.

In order to explain the practice of affective writing I invite you to encounter one of the sections from Kathleen Stewart's (2007, 23) *Ordinary Affects* – a compilation of affective moments in present-day ordinary life in the United States.

YARD SALE

> Her neighbor advertises his moving sale in the paper. He's got quality items: a new couch, oak bookshelves, and major appliances. By seven AM a hundred people are gathered outside the gates. It's a tense and strangely vital scene as strangers, bent on getting stuff, half bond and half vie for the best place to rush the gates when they open. One man goes and gets coffee and donuts to share. A woman and her daughter strategize about how to reach before anyone else both the media console sitting at the far end of the yard and the washing machine propped up on a dolly in the driveway. A grandmother is a habitual yard-saler. She laughs about how it got so bad she had to buy a pickup truck and build a second garage to store all the stuff.
>
> Now bodies begin to maneuver and align. When the gates open at eight they rush in. By ten, everything has been carted away.

I quote Yard Sale at length, as I believe the section communicates two aspects that are central to understanding the ways in which affective nationalism emerges through the encounter with affective writing. First, the text illustrates a way of engaging language and text to stimulate attention and associations that differs from the expected style of producing academic text. Second, I read this text as a moment of affective nationalism. Let me explain both aspects in more detail.

When I thumbed through the book for the first time, I was surprised. From what I knew about the author, the publisher, the acknowledgements section and the first chapter, I expected a book that resembled the majority of academic texts I read. I expected to read an analysis of everyday life in the US. Yet, when I began to read from chapter two onwards, I realised that this book, even though it maintains an academic aura through the integration of the aspects I have mentioned above, is different. First, the chapters are short, ranging from three pages to one paragraph in length. Second,

the author barely refers to other academic sources of knowledge than her own immediate written output. Third, most of the texts read like a narrative. At times, it feels like reading a novel rather than a scholarly book.

Fourth and most importantly, reading these short texts have a different effect on me than the academic texts I usually read. Allow me to illustrate what I mean. By narrating moments of people's everyday lives, I feel invited to picture these people during their activities. Referring back to the moment described in 'Yard Sale', I can easily picture people crowding in front of a closed iron gate, waiting for something to happen and sharing similar expectations. Jostling in front of the cold metal struts they are anxious to get a head start on their competitors who are, at the same time, their accomplices of the moment. Yet, it is not Stewart who tells me with her exact words that these people share similar feelings and expectations. This idea, rather, unfolds *through* her writing and through my encounter with her writing. Her narrative style, what she describes and how she connects and disconnects people in the story offer an analysis through moments of affective encounters. Reading the text stimulates me to arrange and rearrange the people in front of the gate, the driveway, the items for sale and the pick-up truck. The text, or to be precise, me reading this text in a specific place at a certain time with other things going on around me, makes me think about certain things in a certain way. The text affects me.

Yet, other readers might be affected differently. Different readers connect in different ways with this text as the encounter with the text emphasises a moment of affective nationalism. Reading the text made me think about a duplex house, in a residential suburban settlement of a medium-sized US American city, say Lexington or Louisville in Kentucky. These are the US cities I have been to while I read parts of *Ordinary Affects* for the first time. In my imagination of the scene, most of the people are white. The grandmother wears her white hair long. The man with the coffee and donuts wears a grey T-Shirt and blue shorts, he is tall and has a small belly. The donuts are chocolate glazed...

I could go on delving into the details of what Stewart's text produced in my imagination. Yet, what I want to point out is that the text and my making-sense of it are ridden with preconditions. The text does things, yet what it produces, such as my imaginations, are not predefined but emerging in the encounter with the text at the same time as the encounter with the text activates my past experiences and bodily histories. As a consequence, encounters with text and language affect as they stimulate the creation of something new. The moment of affective encounter is more forceful and more diverse in what is emerging through the encounter when the text confuses.

While Stewart's writing approach inspires me to engage in a describing and story-telling mode, I distinguish my account of affective writing by directly positioning myself within the vignettes. I conceive of vignettes as the written output of a thick description of moments central to my research. 'They are a story of my interaction with another culture', suggests the Australian educationalist Jayne Pitard (2016, 7). To retrace the mechanisms of an affective nationalism, the vignettes disassemble the bodies, objects and places involved, at the same time as they convey ideas of how to make sense of the bodily relations. In other words, I use vignettes as research tools to condense what I experienced during the field research (Ely et al. 1997). As such, my vignettes seek to achieve two things: First, they try to be transparent about my perspectives by situating myself within the moments of affective encounters. In these moments, I become a storyteller who abstains from speaking for anybody but herself. My bodily histories bear on the affective capacities of bodies involved in the research process and, as a consequence, also on what attracts my attention and what remains neglected. Second, vignettes intend to trigger affective experiences in the reader. My idea of an affective nationalism and how materially produced national representations emerge and affect bodies in Azerbaijan unfold from and through the encounter with the written texts. Most scholars would argue that all language affects, independent from a specific writing style. I agree. I suggest, however, that texts in the style of autoethnographic vignettes catalyse what I intend to communicate through moments of affective encounter with the vignettes. Most importantly, 'each vignette ha[s] to stand alone as a text' (Pitard 2016, 2).

In writing the vignettes, I confine myself to moments. I am not describing my research stays at length. A vignette evokes a moment during my research that made me realise affective nationalism. The idea of affective nationalism would usually make me nervous. I often felt I was unable to describe what affective nationalism really is and how it makes itself felt. The moments I describe in the vignettes had made affective nationalism sink in at some point, at least partially. A part of me remains critical and unconvinced. This all happened after I had come back from my stays in Azerbaijan, when I would talk about my experiences, memories and the unprecedented things that had been interesting or confusing, or when I would read a new theoretical paper or would receive feedback on a talk. Realising how affective nationalism plays out unfolded in these moments and in the flashing encounter with my memories.

## 3.3 Azerbaijan and me

The relationship I like to think of as the story between Azerbaijan and me started in 2007. I was a graduate student in geography at the University of Heidelberg at that time and had applied to a program that sent graduate students and young professionals to conduct projects of three to four months in the so-called Global South. As I had started to learn Russian the year before, I chose to apply to go to one of the successor states of the Soviet Union and picked a project on sustainable energy in Azerbaijan. I had hardly ever heard of Azerbaijan before and went to locate it on a map for the first time. I got accepted and, in autumn 2007, went off to live in Baku (*Bakı*), and for a short period also in Lenkoran (*Lənkəran*) and *Sadakhlı*, a small village close to the Azerbaijani-Georgian border, for four months. I was both, overwhelmed and touched by the unconditional open-heartedness, interest and trust of the people I met, and annoyed by younger men staring at me in public. Through living with different families and feeling the young men's gazes on the street, I felt how I was feminised and how my presence in everyday encounters marked me as an unmarried, non-virgin, heterosexual woman from Western Europe. The difference between the wealth and glamorous lifestyles of those with economic and political power and the poverty and vulnerability of those without economic and political power made me furious at the same time as the apparent ease with which people dealt with the inequality and unreliability of everyday life impressed me. These first months of living in Azerbaijan shaped the way I would return to the country and the people in the future.

In the following years, I came back to live mainly in Baku and Ganja (*Gəncə*) as a student participant during one university summer and one winter school, to do four months of fieldwork with environmental NGOs for my diploma thesis and to work as a lecturer at a local university. I established most of the contacts to families and research informants that I later relied on for my PhD fieldwork during my time as an assistant and German lecturer at the State Agricultural University in Ganja. While I lived and worked for twelve months in the city of Ganja after having graduated from university in 2010, I also strengthened my social networks with people and families living in Baku, *Göygöl*, Sheki (*Şəki*) and *Sumqayıt*. Finishing my engagement as a lecturer at the university in Ganja in summer 2011, I started working on my PhD project in fall of the same year at the University of Jena.

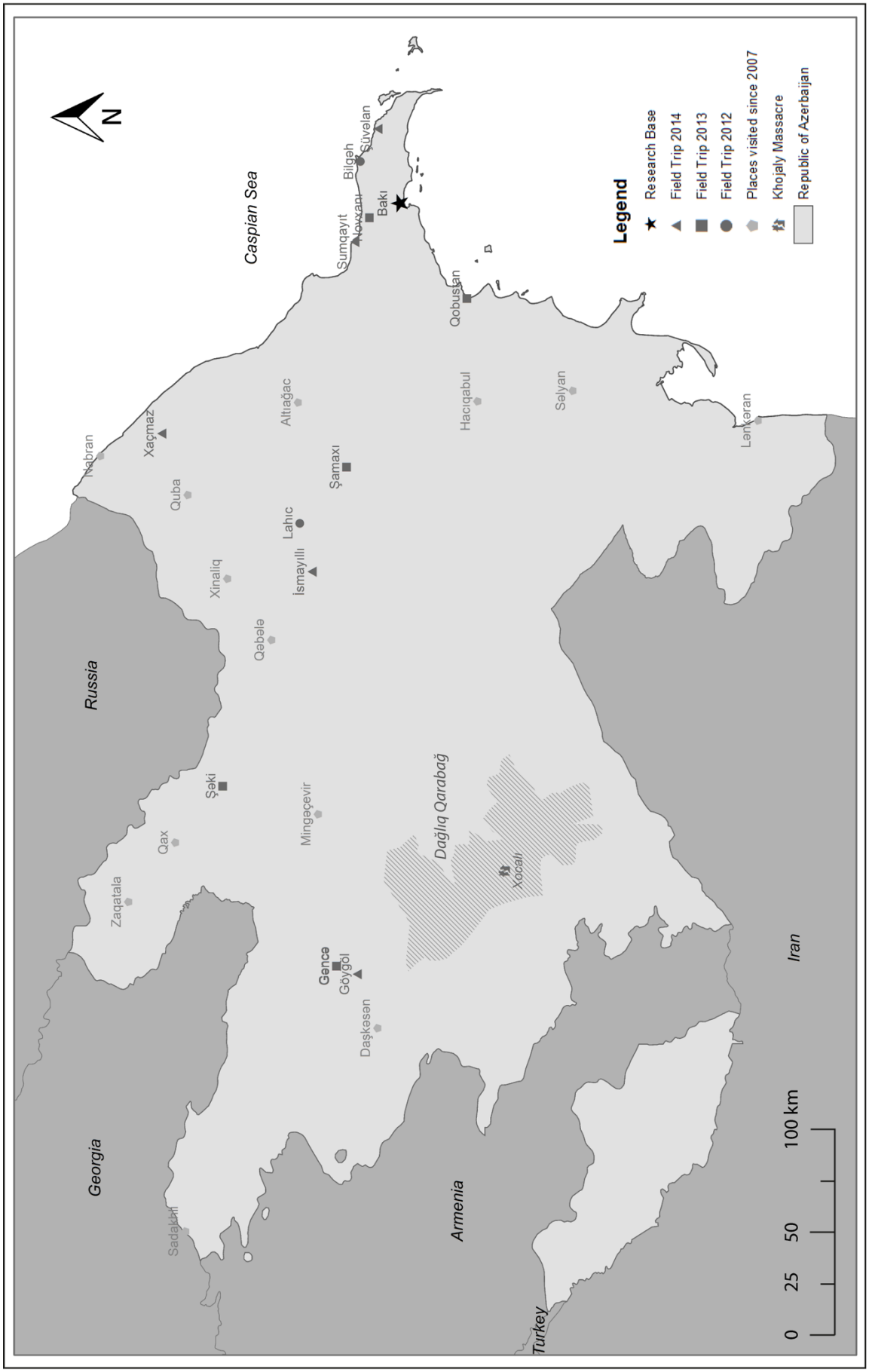


Figure 3: Map of Azerbaijan showing the places visited before and during the research project (2007 – 2014)

With a conceptual background in practice and structuration theories I was, at the beginning of my PhD project, mainly interested in the semiotics of nation-building and the representations of Azerbaijani national identity. During my first PhD research trip of two and a half months in summer 2012, shortly after Baku had hosted the Eurovision Song Contest, I conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with university professors, political opposition leaders, NGO representatives, tourism experts, artists, journalists, entrepreneurs, people who would describe themselves as active members of the civil society and one devout male Muslim about Azerbaijani values, traditions, national history and the way the Azerbaijani nation is being constructed and staged by various people. One of these interview questions, for example, addressed my interviewees' historical imaginations about Azerbaijan. I asked: What do you consider to be important events and historical developments for nation-building in Azerbaijan? Another set of questions centred on Baku hosting the Eurovision Song Contest. Among other things, I enquired: How do you assess the way Azerbaijan has been represented during the song contest? What helped the country's positive public portrayal? What did you dislike about the ways in which Azerbaijani traditions, people or the countryside were represented?

I also met friends and families that I had already known for a few years and talked with them about political and social issues they were interested in and I was interested in. I participated in people's everyday lives, by being a friend, a guest or a loose contact, and took notes from time to time.

Yet, at that stage in my PhD research my note-taking was neither regular nor comprehensive. While I considered the formal interviews as producing valuable information for my research, I did not know how and if at all to make sense of my, at times scattered, notes and diary entries. Upon my return to Germany, I began to analyse my material with a focus on the ways in which elites had staged Azerbaijan before and during the Eurovision Song Contest 2012. After a few months, however, the sudden illness and eventual death of my first PhD supervisor in early 2013 shattered my PhD research and almost terminated it. The death of my supervisor paralysed me. I realised how much the progress of my research depended on institutional support and academic mentoring.

Without knowing if I would be able to continue and finish my PhD, yet equipped with a small grant that allowed me to travel for a second fieldtrip to Azerbaijan, I spent another one and a half months mainly in Baku, Ganja and Sheki in summer 2013. This research trip felt entirely different from the first one, not just because nobody was supervising my PhD at that time. In preparation of this second field trip I had started to read about geographic methodologies that would approach the lived environment of people by attending less to what people actually say in interviews but more to irritations, ambivalences and ruptures during research encounters and observations. I

began to deal with what I would later call Lacanian psychoanalysis. While conducting fewer interviews, I took more notes about moments that made me wonder and began to write my diary on a daily basis. I met twelve different people from the political opposition, social NGOs, the media, arts and business sector for formal interviews. In contrast to the way I conducted the interviews during my first stay, I tried to meet my informants twice or three times. In the interviews, I asked, for example: What role does the conflict with Armenia and the Nagorny-Karabakh region play for Azerbaijani nation-building? How would you describe the Azerbaijani people's stance towards foreign nations such as Russia, Turkey, Iran or other European countries? What unifies people in Azerbaijan and what separates them? Finally, I participated in public (youth) activities such as the celebration of Europe Day on 9 May and public activities of the political opposition, such as the celebration of Republic Day on 28 May.

The fieldtrip felt like a fresh perspective on my research project. I had come to know new people. I had, for example, established more diverse contacts with artists and young men and women who spoke neither Russian nor English and had little money, in contrast to most of my other contacts. I left Azerbaijan motivated and hopeful to find a possibility to continue my PhD project.

In fall 2013, I was able to resume a position as PhD student at the University of Zurich. With the change of PhD supervision, the questions I asked and in particular the conceptual and methodological literature I started to engage with changed. I got more and more interested in Lacanian psychoanalysis and Spinozist-Deleuzian affect. I varied my approach to investigating nationalism in Azerbaijan and spent my next three months in Azerbaijan in spring 2014, living with one family in Baku and for two weeks with one family in Ganja. Apart from leaving the family in Baku on occasion for interviews and meetings with informants outside the circle of relatives and friends of the family, I spent most of my time with the female members of the family, mostly my host mother and her daughter, her mother as well as mother-in-law, her sister and sisters-in-law, her cousins and aunts. I spent my everyday life with the family and took part in whatever was happening and whatever they were planning on doing, such as visiting relatives for dinner. I always carried a voice recorder, a camera and my field diary with me. On average, I invested two to three hours every evening for narrative entries in my diary. I also conducted eleven additional conversations that could count as unstructured interviews – with university professors, youth activists, artists and one devout female Muslim. I organised these conversations around different themes such as family, marriage and gender roles, corporeal beauty and body politics, religion and faith, or nationalism and patriotism. Rather than posing concrete interview questions, I asked my conversation partners to first describe specific situations or feelings, to then explain why they

experience these situations or feelings the way they do, to subsequently evaluate their observations and assessments and to finally challenge them. My interview strategy aimed at teasing out ambiguities, inexplicabilities and discontinuities of experiencing national belonging and alienation in Azerbaijan. I visited one family once more in early fall 2014 for three weeks. Their youngest daughter got married and I was invited to her wedding. I was involved in some of the wedding preparations and the wedding itself. I did not meet any other informants outside the family's circle.

As my concept of affective nationalism and my affective methodology developed primarily through my conceptual engagement with affect theory and psychoanalysis during my time in Zurich, almost all the research encounters I draw on and enliven in this thesis stem from these two research trips in 2014.Yet, the two research trips before my time in Zurich were also important for the iterative development of my PhD project. Instead of perceiving the development of my research project as a linear process, the entanglement of conducting field research, reading conceptual papers, developing methodological strategies and analysing research material unfolds rather in the form of a spiral.

Revisiting my trajectories of coming into touch with Azerbaijan reveals that the most significant element of my encounters constituting and shaping my research, were the people I had met. It is then also these people who, apart from me, will speak in this thesis. For communicating my research encounters within the thesis, I have translated my material into English. I conducted all of my interviews in Russian, English or German. In the families, I spoke Russian with the parent- and grandparent generation and mostly English with the younger family members aged between 20 and 40. Apart from going grocery shopping, ordering lunch in a café and asking for directions, I am unable to speak Azerbaijani. I do, however, understand everyday family talks and small talk. I also had a fair knowledge of Turkish during my fieldtrips in 2014, yet I was unable to deploy my Turkish language skills in Azerbaijan. Most people would understand what I would say in Turkish but then answer in Azerbaijani. Even though I mostly understood people's responses I continuously failed to switch back to Turkish to allow a conversation in Turkish-Azerbaijani.

## 3.4 Who else speaks?

While, over the course of my research, I recorded interviews and conversations with more than 60 different people, not all of them will speak in this thesis. Some of my informants, however, will appear several times talking about different issues. In order to situate the voices, you will encounter throughout the following four empirical chapters, let me briefly introduce the people I refer to in

my vignettes and who speak through excerpts from interviews. Whereas information on a person's positionality in terms of gender, age group, educational background or economic status matters to contextualise an answer or a reaction to a question, the person's official identity becomes unimportant. In order to protect my research informants, I have anonymised all names and picked pseudonyms instead.

**Elnara** is a well-educated young woman in her mid-twenties. She grew up in a middle-class household in Baku, enjoyed a university education, studied for one year in Italy and at the age of twenty-five, married Ilgar. They have a one-year old daughter, Leyla. Since Leyla was born, Elnara has been working as a freelance designer. Yet, as much as she enjoys her work, her daughter Leyla is her number one priority. Elnara and Ilgar's marriage and their family represent, in many ways, a modern family in Baku, which continues to honour cultural traditions. Elnara has one older sister and one younger brother.

**Leyla** is the one-year old daughter of Elnara and Ilgar. As the youngest member of Elnara's and Ilgar's extended families she is everybody's darling and much adored by her parents, her grandparents and her aunts. She lives with her parents in a spacious flat in a newly erected multi-storey apartment building close to the city centre of Baku.

**Ilgar** is a well-educated young man in his mid-twenties. Like Elnara, he grew up in a middle-class household in Baku. He graduated from Azerbaijan State Economic University in Baku with a Bachelor's degree in economics. He married Elnara at the age of 25 and, holding a managerial position within the company of his father-in-law, has been the bread winner for the family ever since. He has one older and one younger sister.

**Nigar** is one of Elnara's cousins. She is twenty and in the midst of studying for a Bachelor's degree at Baku State University. She is single and lives with her parents, her sister and her grandparents in a renovated flat in a residential neighbourhood of Baku that has developed since the 1960s.

**Firuza** is about fifty-five and lives with her son in Baku. She is originally from Southern Azerbaijan, from the region around Lenkoran. After having divorced her husband she took her teenage son to live with her in Baku. She has been working as a maid

for Elnara's mother for several years before starting to serve in Elnara's household after Leyla's birth.

**Azad** is thirty-nine years old and lives with his wife and his two daughters in Baku. After having received his PhD in public policy from a university in the United States a couple of years ago, he has returned to Azerbaijan and has worked as a professor at a university in Baku ever since.

**Nisa** is a young woman in her mid-thirties. She received a scholarship to study abroad and obtained her Master's degree in education from a university in the United States. She is single and lives with her mother and her brother in her mother's house in Ganja. She holds a leading position within the university administration of a local university. Since wages in educational institutions in Azerbaijan are, however, low, she can not afford to live on her own, despite working full-time.

**Konul** is a young woman in her early thirties. She is single and lives with her family in Baku. She received a Master's degree in English literature from the University of Languages and works as an English teacher for the British Petroleum office in Baku.

**Samira** is a young woman in her early thirties. She has moved to the United States a few years ago in order to live with her husband, who is originally also from Azerbaijan. About three times a year, she comes visiting her family and friends in Baku for a few months. Despite living abroad, she perceives herself as an active member of a Baku-based youth activist group.

**Eldar** is a young man and twenty-seven years old. He is originally from Ganja, but lives in Baku with his relatives since he started to work for a Baku-based thinktank. He received a scholarship to obtain his Bachelor's degree in political science in the United States. After having worked for a few years for an international organisation in Ganja and now for an Azerbaijani thinktank in Baku, he tries to get further funding to obtain a Master's degree abroad. Like other well-educated young people working in the public sector or for independent research institutions or NGOs, his salary does not pay for a flat to live on his own in Baku.

**Samir** is in his early twenties and just finished his Bachelor's degree in international relations at ADA University in Baku (a recently established university, which aims at producing the future generation of leaders for Azerbaijan). Originally from a city

in Western Azerbaijan, *Mingəçevir*, he has lived with relatives in Baku since he started studying at the university.

**Ilkin** is in his early forties. He lives with his wife and their child in Baku and works as a lecturer at Baku State University.

**Vali** is in his late twenties. He is single and lives with his parents and his two brothers in a two-bedroom apartment in Baku. He has obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degree in Computer Science from the Azerbaijan State Oil and Industrial University. Since graduating from the university he has had several jobs as IT specialist and tries to establish his own business.

**Gulay** is in her mid-twenties. After having received a Bachelor's degree in economics from Azerbaijan State Economic University, she started to work as an accountant with an Azerbaijani telecommunication company. She is single and lives with her mother and her younger sister in a two-bedroom apartment close to the city centre of Baku.

**Nurlana** is in her late thirties and about to finish her postdoctoral qualification at Baku State University. She has already received her Master's and her PhD degree from Baku State University. Apart from fulfilling her teaching obligations at the university she is part-time employed at the National Academy of Science. She is single and lives with her parents in an apartment in Baku. Her family is originally from Nagorny-Karabakh and has moved to Baku in the early 1990s due to the increasing violence and military attacks in the Karabakh region during the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

# 4 Embodying nationhood

> *A wild melody arose. Iljas Beg jumped into the middle of the hall. He drew his dagger. His feet moved into the fiery rhythm of the Caucasian Mountain Dance. The blade glittered in his hand. Nino danced up to him. Her feet looked like small strange toys [...]. Nino's feet flew whirling around the hall, her supple arms depicting all stages of fear, despair and submission. In her left hand she held a handkerchief. Her whole body trembled. Only the coins on her cap lay quietly on her forehead, and that was the correct way...*
>
> *— Kurban Said, Ali and Nino (2000, 41–42)*

In what ways bodies become national bodies and how corporeal moves sustain national significance are the first questions I address in my analysis of affective nationalism in Azerbaijan. As nations unfold through bodies so do nationalisms function through bodies. Remember, for example, the moments of affective encounter with the German national anthem and the Azerbaijani national flag that I revisited in chapter 1. In the moment the anthem and the flag unfolded as objects of national significance through the encounter between different bodies and objects in a specific situation, a sense of nation emerged as an embodied experience. Yet, in what ways do bodies turn into national bodies and gestures into corporeal movements constituting national experiences? How does affective nationalism unfold as an embodied condition of contemporary world experience?

In the course of this chapter I propose answers to these questions. Reflecting on my experiences of female folk dancing in Azerbaijan I ask, in the first part of the chapter, how affect turns different bodies into national bodies and engenders feelings of national belonging or alienation. Inspired by scholarship pointing to the ways in which dancing and the constitution of national identities intertwine (Reed 1998; Zhemukhov and King 2013; Kaschl 2003), I turn to the affective mechanisms that perpetuate national corporealities through dancing and examine the ways in which ordinary dance experiences trigger ideas of national collectivity.

In the second part of the chapter, I turn to everyday productions of nationally desirable female bodies. I enquire about the ways in which affective encounters reproduce female beauty in Azerbaijan. Building on research that has investigated the relationships between gendered nationalisms, power and beauty ideals such as in beauty pageants and sex tourism (Faria 2010;

Balogun 2012; Rivers-Moore 2013), I examine the ways in which female bodily beauty turns into a commodity that promises experiences of national belonging.

## 4.1 Female folk dancing in Azerbaijan: what, how, why?

I love dancing. Listening to rhythmic melodies as in pop and rock music spurs my body to move, to play with the music. My bending hips, shaking hands and swinging buttocks challenge the flow of tones. As if dancing empowers my body. I simply feel good in moving my body to music that inspires me to move.

I was thus not surprised that dancing in Azerbaijan caught my attention. Collective folk dancing strikes me as a major constituent of everyday life in Azerbaijan. Most of the academic literature on nation-building in Azerbaijan, however, ignores its importance with the notable exception of Lala Yalçın-Heckmann's (2008) investigation of the economy of Azerbaijani weddings. She points out how traditional folk dancing in Azerbaijan is essentially gendered and used as a means to express social power. In her analysis of an Azerbaijani wedding, collective yet gendered dance performances emerge as central elements of the non-verbal communication displaying social rank and power relations through, for example, the duration of the dances and the diversity of dancing figures. My own experience of doing ethnographic research in Azerbaijan ties in with the observation that gendered dancing – that means women and men are dancing in separate groups and maintain different dancing styles – materialises as a major activity before and during weddings, engagement ceremonies and birthday parties. In recent years, gendered performances of collective folk dancing have become commonplace not only on TV shows and as the casual, spontaneous dancing within circles of friends and families. Since hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in 2012 and following the increased commercialisation of the New Year holiday, *Novruz Bayramı*, collective folk dancing experiences its public revival. Yet, in contrast to Yalçın-Heckmann, who is interested in the specific messages dance performances in Azerbaijan communicate, I wonder about the ways in which structures of corporeal moves connect and disconnect bodies and objects through the activation of embodied dancing knowledge. How do I come to identify a dance as an Azerbaijani way of dancing? If national belonging and alienation emerge as felt realities in moments of affective encounter, how do dancing and corporeal movements contribute to the constitution of national bodies and processes of national subjectification?

## *On the becoming of embodied knowledge of female dancing in Azerbaijan*

A 1ST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

I hesitate, unsure of what to do. Elnara's cousin Nigar is inviting me over and over again to join her on the dance floor. I am sitting at one out of fourteen decorated tables in a celebratory, ornamented hall. It is Elnara's daughter Leyla's first birthday and I am celebrating her special day together with about 100 other adults and a dozen children. Judging from the size and the glamour of the birthday party as a combination of elegant evening gowns, a four-course meal, the announcements, the music and the dancing this evening event feels like a wedding.

Nigar flashes me a smile and beckons to me. While gently tripping from one foot to the other, she is swinging her arms gracefully to the rhythm of the music. The music appears fast and the mewling sound drowns any table talk. My inner voice tells me that I should join the other women on the dance floor; out of respect and to feel more like a proper part of the celebration.

It's not just Nigar who started to dance a few minutes ago. Among some people I don't know, I see her mother, Elnara's mother and sister and Ilgar's mother and sisters dancing as well. They hold their heads high, swinging lightfooted from left to right. From time to time, they look at each other; from time to time, they stare into space. Even though everybody seems to dance alone – no touching, no coming closer, no moving back – the synchronised movements feel like a collective endeavour. Every dancing body blends in at its proper place.

I smile sheepishly back at Nigar and rise from my chair. I flatten my dress. An unnecessary move; its midnight blue synthetic fabric is still unwrinkled. I walk slowly towards Nigar and join her at the verge of the dance floor. I look down at my feet. Concentrating on the instrumental sound, I try to bring my moving feet in line with the rhythm of the music. I look up again and I make an effort to copy Nigar's leg and arm movements. While alternately and slightly lifting my feet to the rhythm, I extend both my arms and hands sideward and start rotating my wrists inward. My fingers are stretched out and both my middle fingers draw an imaginary circle in the air. I am not quite convinced by my corporeal performance but I continue to dance. Maybe I get better the longer I try? Yet, I don't feel I fit in with the other dancing bodies.

Nigar brims over with enthusiasm for my dancing. She smiles at me and is clapping her hands to the rhythm. I enjoy how she approves of my dancing. I instantly feel more confident. Yet, an incomprehensive feeling of discomfort and lack of authenticity lingers inside me. I cannot strip off my tension and my doubts. Do I ever get rid of this sense of

> awkwardness when dancing in, what I call, an Azerbaijani way of female dancing (field notes from 07 February 2014, Baku)?

While I usually like moving my body to music, in the vignette above, I have to force myself to join Nigar and the other dancers on the dance floor. I identify the music as 'mewling' and noisy. I dislike it. But, is it really my disapproval of the music that makes me reluctant and anxious to dance during this birthday celebration? Why do I isolate myself from the other people dancing? How come I feel unfitting at the same time as I observe the other dancing bodies contributing to a 'collective endeavour'?

In particular my hesitation to join Nigar on the dance floor, my bodily sense of discomfort and the ways in which the dancers' bodily movements express smoothness and grace indicate that affect functions as a mechanism connecting as well as disconnecting different bodies and objects. Through the corporeal relations emerging within affective encounters I feel alienated from the dancing bodies on the dance floor at the same time as I perceive these bodies in harmony with the music in this situation of celebrating a first birthday party in Baku. It is affect putting bodies into place and (un-)relating different bodies to one another. In the situation described above, national categorisations emerge through the corporeal experiences of dancing and feelings of discomfort that characterise the affective encounter between different bodies, objects and places. Let me explain this point in more detail.

In the moment I feel awkward and distant to the movements and try to make sense of my irritating sensations I experience the occasional dancing as Azerbaijani. I identify Nigar's and my own corporeal moves as an Azerbaijani female dancing style in the moment I include our bodily practices into my making sense of the ways in which I experience world. My interpretation uses nation, almost unreflexively and thus in very banal terms, as a medium of signification. I justify my distress with lacking authenticity through not belonging to an Azerbaijani community constituted of bodies that unexcitedly inherit this style of female dancing. Kelly Askew (2002, 221) emphasises how 'authenticity [...] distinguishes those who know (e.g., a dance troupe [...]) from those who don't, and thus constitutes a technique of differentiating people and bestowing symbolic capital on a select group.' The degree of feeling authentic in doing dance performances becomes a central element in distinguishing between people who know and people who do not know, thus separating the ones that belong to a community of shared national dance practices from those who do not belong.

The people on the dance floor give themselves up to the music – at least following my description of the dancing guests. Elnara's and Ilgar's aunts, sisters and cousins keep their bodies with the rhythm of the music. Their dancing is smooth, elegant and pleasing my gaze. Although I do not enjoy the music very much, I enjoy watching the ways in which the people connect with the music. The sight of choreographed moving body parts, such as tripping feet, circling fingers and shyly swinging hips adds another dimension to the sound of the music. Bodies and music form a mutually intensifying unity. The moving bodies and the music seem to belong together like the pieces in a puzzle. I, however, feel excluded from this puzzle of matching sounds, gestures and bodies. Nigar's enthusiastic and affirmative reaction to my attempt to dance also indicates that female dancing in Azerbaijan is attributed as something positive and enjoyable.

In contrast to Nigar, for example, who is *just* dancing and enjoying herself, I 'get "stressed" in [the] encounter' (Ahmed 2007, 156) with her, the music and the bodily movements because my dancing imitating Nigar's corporeal movements strikes me as deviant. In the vignette, I explain how I remain unconvinced by my dancing and how my body feels tense. For me, this style of dancing is exceptional. Unexceptional, on the contrary, would be my dancing I imagined at the beginning of the chapter. In that moment, I had pictured myself dancing at a party at a friend's house in Zurich or on a night out in a club in some German city. The person playing the recorded music that would inspire me to dance during those occasions would probably describe it as Western Anglophone popular, electronic or rock music. Even if I did not love it, I would rather not label it as 'mewling' – a noise that reminds me of the constant sound signal of a whining cat. Apart from the music the DJ would play at my friend's party, the corporeal movements, gestures and the orientation of dancing bodies to one another would be different. Instead of circling fingers, I would, for example, hold the hands of my friends and invite them to whirl me around. Dancing at the birthday celebration illustrated in the vignette, however, feels choreographed, repetitive and tedious to me. In order to feel less bizarre and to compensate my lack of genuineness I mark the bodily movements as Azerbaijani. I distance my non-Azerbaijani female body from the other bodies that I identify as Azerbaijani (female) bodies. National differentiation is my strategy to assess my dancing as *not quite* matching the smoothness of the corporeal performances I observe. In this moment of affective encounter between the music, my body, the gestures of the other dancers and the situation and place of celebrating a first birthday in Baku, nationalism unfolds as the banal way of creating difference.

Being immersed in everyday life in Azerbaijan, I often feel that my bodily sense of self does *not quite* match the idea of Azerbaijani bodily femininity. I feel odd being taller and more athletic than

the mainly petite and slender women I see in Azerbaijan. I feel I stand out wearing my thin, brown hair short, compared to women in Azerbaijan who often wear their thick, dark hair long. I also dress casually compared to young women in Azerbaijan, who dress fashionably. Walking on the street, waiting for the bus, strolling around a public park or sitting on a university campus, I often feel people, in particular younger men and women, gaping at me. Random encounters with strangers reproduce and validate my feelings of bodily difference. I remember, for example, several times, when a younger man would follow me with running steps. 'Ty sportsmenka?', he would ask in Russian, unsolicited and straightforward, while we both continued walking side by side at my pace. When that happened for the first few times, I was curious. I reduced my pace, answered the question with 'No.' and asked the person why he thought I was an athlete. The answer was always the same: I would walk very fast and I look like an athlete because I am tall, too. After this happened a few times, though, I felt of these approaches more and more as an attempt to engage me in a flirt and started to ignore guys inquiring upon my athletic look.

Yet, my feelings of difference did not unfold through the guys' gazes but through my 'ways of seeing the world' (Brubaker 2004, 81) activated in moments of bodily encounters such as the encounter between a busy street in Baku, my continuous experience of standing out and a young man wondering about my height and figure. In moments of affective encounters with bodies and objects that irritate in striking me as different my 'diffuse self-understanding as a member of a particular nation crystallizes into a strongly bounded sense of groupness' (Brubaker 2004, 47). Thus, while I mark the young people staring at me as different, as Azerbaijanis, I identify myself as non-Azerbaijani. To be more precise: in order to cope with my feelings of difference I make sense of my *looks*, my *corporeality*, as non-Azerbaijani. The national differentiation I perform, thus, unfolds as what Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed and Kirsten Simonsen (2006, 177) have termed 'practical orientalism.' The young people's gazes upon my body 'are involved in [my] objectification[s] of the Other and feelings of being objectified by the Other (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 178). In this context, the Other emerges as Azerbaijani.

Of course, these processes of differentiation are not confined to the emergence of categories constituting the nation. Rather, the encounter on the street also marked my body as female, non-Muslim, heterosexual and white. Since the guy reached out to me in Russian I felt alien because Russian is a foreign language to me. At the same time I am flattered by his direct address as he identified me as a person who looks like she would know Russian, instead of approaching me in English – the language spoken by far more Western-looking people in Azerbaijan. Feeling belonging or alienation to a sense of national community thus always intertwines with

identifications in terms of gender, age, class, race, religion and sexuality. My emphasis on the emergence of national bodies instead of, say, religious bodies, stems from the ways in which I make sense of this encounter between different bodies and objects at a specific place of a certain time. What matters is the situational configuration of different bodies and objects, such as a busy street in Baku, my athletic build, a guy addressing me in Russian, the pace of moving feet and expectations of how to behave according to socially acceptable conventions that engender feelings of national belonging and alienation. A different arrangement of bodies, corporeal moves and clothing styles could have produced a stronger sense of religious belonging or alienation, instead.

Hence, affective nationalism materialises, first and foremost, as a bodily experience. Understanding the body emerging as 'beyond the body-as-organism' (Blackman 2012, 5), affective experiences do not reside in bodies but are being activated in encounters with different bodies and shape these encounters and 'how things make an impression' (Ahmed 2010, 44). Bodies emerge as sets of relations rather than exist as substances such as a human body, a flower bud or a ship's hull. Neither do affects circulate through embodiment and bodily sensations between distinct organic creatures. Rather, bodies emerge as a feeling of corporeality, or, to be precise, 'intercorporeality' (Blackman 2012, 12). Bodies materialise as processes of interrelated embodiment in the moment of, for example, touching velvet, smelling vanilla or as the example of the vignette discloses, trying to move feet and hands in line with a rhythmic sound. Within these processes of embodiment, bodies take effect as operating mechanisms in affective relations constantly congregating and dispersing my lived experiences of the world. As a 'device that reveals' (Pile 2010, 11) the world as I unknowingly and knowingly understand it, embodied experience arranges what I feel is happening to me and around me. It is thus through modes of embodied affect that something such as a distinct object, a place or a body attracts my attention, irritates me or passes by unnoticed. It is through affect that an unforeseen sequence of situations is developing and that I feel how the atmosphere of a situation is changing.

Let's return to the vignette. Seeing Nigar dance activates my feeling of being a non-Azerbaijani woman. At the same time, her corporeal performance strikes me as familiar. I remember how her dancing resembles the dance performances that I have often seen on TV and at past weddings. Through the subliminal activation of past experiences I know that politeness demands for me to dance. The actual performance of the dancing, however, makes me feel uncomfortable. Nigar's apparent effortlessness and fluency in moving her torso, legs, arms and hands to the sound of the music in contrast to my sense of discomfort prompt me to interpret her bodily movements as habitual in Azerbaijan. In dancing, 'bodies express already existing normative ideals' (Cresswell

2006, 58). The moment of affective encounter thus yields Nigar's corporeal movements as the conventional and appropriate way of moving on the dance floor during the birthday celebration. At the same time I experience corporeal alienation through feeling and moving inappropriately.

It is affect as 'embodied meaning-making' (Wetherell 2012, 4) – that means interpreting experiences according to the ways in which we make sense of the world – that incites me to understand the dance performance as female dancing in Azerbaijan in order to justify my corporeal discomfort, as 'movements are intimately choreographed and patterned with [...] words' (Wetherell 2012, 80). Affect conditions my experience of hearing the music, seeing Nigar dancing, moving my own body and feeling awkward. In fact, realising my bodily discomfort is crucial in understanding the role affect plays when I recognise structures of corporeal moves as an Azerbaijani way of female dancing. It is through irritation, that means deviation from what I know and expect, that I become aware of the moment. Through exploring Dance Movement Therapy, McCormack (2003, 493) experiences choreographed corporeal interaction in a similar way. Like me, revisiting his feelings of discomfort and confusion made him consider 'how particular movements are implicated in wider cultural geographies of identity and signification.' The meeting between Nigar's and my body, our corporeal moves, feelings and the place thus develop through the affective encounter. Yet, it is important to remember that my experiences of dancing and of feeling appropriate or inappropriate are not rooted in the body. 'While attention is routed through the matter of corporeality', notes McCormack (2003, 494), 'it is never contained by or limited by the form or position of the body.' The way I make sense of my discomfort as the activation and appropriation of embodied knowledge unfolds within affective encounters between different bodies and objects.

My embodied experience of discomfort while dancing also marks the ways in which different bodies have different capacities to affect and to be affected. In the vignette, I identified Nigar as an Azerbaijani woman dancing a popular female Azerbaijani dance. Her corporeal moves attracted my attention. I interpreted her movement as a female Azerbaijani dance because I have observed the same style of dancing of other women during weddings that I have attended in the past and on TV. Somebody else, though, might have gotten interested in, for example, the dress she wore and might not have interpreted her bodily movements as a nationalised and gendered style of dancing. Bodily markedness, somatic experiences and historicity shape the qualities of this affective encounter and thus if and how something attracts my or somebody else's attention.

Apart from different bodily capacities to affect and to be affected the specific place and context of the meeting between our bodies conditioned the affective encounter. For me the celebration of Leyla's first birthday feels like a special space of experiencing what I identify as Azerbaijani culture.

My immersion in the family in addition to the atmosphere of the ballroom, the arrangement of chairs and tables, the music and the decoration inspired me to experience the birthday celebration as a specific space triggering feelings of national belonging and alienation; echoing Navaro-Yashin (2012, 174), different objects constituting a sense of place 'discharge' affects. Yet, I suggest that it was in particular the dancing or corporeal movements on the dance floor that prompted the becoming of national knowledge. Dancing as an affective device, thus, not only relates different dancing and not dancing bodies, corporeal moves, sounds and places. It is also 'through dance [that] performers and audience members have the potential to experience and witness embodied knowledge' (Barbour and Hitchmough 2014, 64). Besides, the context of the birthday celebration as a temporary arrangement of different bodies and objects 'makes bodily movement meaningful in dance' (Cresswell 2006, 59).

## *Depositing embodied knowledge on female dancing in Azerbaijan*

Yet, how to acquire embodied knowledge of an Azerbaijani way of female dancing? How to connect positive and affirmative feelings with a specific way of moving the body? How does dancing in a certain way strengthen feelings of national belonging and alienation? In order to explore the ways in which affect conditions national meaning of bodily gestures and corporeal performances, I invite you to accompany me during an ordinary weekday morning in the family home of Elnara, Ilgar and Leyla.

DANCE, LEYLA! DANCE!

> It is 9 a.m., Tuesday morning. Ilgar has already left for work. Elnara, Leyla and myself start into the day by having breakfast in the kitchen. While I am still sitting at the table, chewing a mouthful of porridge, Elnara has just finished feeding Leyla. The girl is sitting in her high chair at the opposite end of the table. She seems full and peaceful. She concentrates on moving an elastic ball between her hands, squeezing her tiny fingers into the fabric. Elnara is busy washing Leyla's breakfast dishes and stands with her back towards us in front of the sink. The French window is halfway open and through the transparent curtains I am spotting bits of the blue sky. The sun bathes the kitchen in a refreshing, bright morning light.
>
> The only thing I feel is disturbing this peaceful setting is the overbearing music from the TV. The screen is mounted to the wall. A corpulent singer, her blond hair pinned up, is squawking her lines into the camera. While the music from the TV is annoying me, Leyla seems to take delight in it. I watch her drop her ball and while she is still sitting in her chair, she starts to move rhythmically up and down. I see her raise her arms and rotate her hands inwards. Her face radiates obvious joy; her mouth is slightly open and she starts to

> make baby noises as if singing a constant tone. Her coordinated movements irritate me. Is she dancing to the music? Do her movements correspond to the popular way of female dancing in Azerbaijan I often see on TV or during weddings and public events? A one-year-old who can barely walk is imitating *the* way of female dancing in Azerbaijan?!
>
> I am dumbfounded. I don't care about the terrible music anymore. I regret having left my camera in the other room, instead.
>
> Leyla's singing catches Elnara's attention and she turns around. Her eyes grow wider and she twists her mouth into a blissful grin. She seems excited about the way her daughter is moving her body. Elnara is beaming with joy and pride. I sense how she devotes all her attention to the child and after some seconds, when Leyla, all of a sudden, stops hopping and drops her arms, Elnara motivates her to move on. Smiling gently at her daughter she starts rhythmically moving from left to right. She extends her arms and rotates her hands inwards, imitating Leyla's movements. "Dance, Leyla! Dance!", she calls in an agitated voice and keeps on animating the child. Yet, Leyla stops hopping and rotating her wrists and just smiles at her mother.
>
> I feel reassured. Elnara's bodily and verbal reaction to Leyla's performance validate my intuition of recognising in the movements a shared Azerbaijani style of female dancing. Yet, I am also stunned. How come Leyla "dances", already? What made her move her body in that specific way? How come she perfectly performs the upper body movements and in particular the rotating wrists that I don't feel confident in doing (field notes from 25 February 2014, Baku)?

The encounter described in the vignette between Leyla, Elnara and myself, following our regular morning activities in the sunny kitchen, hearing the music from the TV and seeing the singer perform on the screen all affects us, yet in different ways. The moment evokes mixed feelings in myself. I am relaxed and enjoy my breakfast at the same time as the TV and the music annoy me. Leyla's movements distract me from the singer on the screen. My confusion about the ways in which she moves makes me attend to her actions. Her bodily moves inspire me to recognise a common style of female dancing in Azerbaijan. I get more and more interested and surprised by the way she moves her arms and rotates her wrists to the rhythm of the music. At once, I become jealous of her ease of moving. I am also, however, satisfied at the moment when Elnara emulates Leyla's performance and motivates her to go on. Her reaction to Leyla confirms my knowledge of Azerbaijan and thus legitimises my sense of doing somewhat successful research. Knowledge about a common style of female dancing in Azerbaijan emerging within affective encounters between different bodies and objects thus does not only move through bodies connecting and disconnecting them but also deposits itself as an embodied feeling of confirmation and assurance.

Reflecting on the ways in which I make sense of the situation and in particular of my own confusion, I suggest that the described moment of affective encounter perplexed Elnara as well. While I was living with the family and spent hours with Elnara and Leyla in the apartment, Elnara would often tell me how words fail to express her love for Leyla. She would say that she had never experienced this kind of deep affection for another human being before. She explained that whereas she had cared for herself and her loved ones as everybody does, she feels, since Leyla was born, how the wish to keep Leyla alive and to make her happy has become of paramount importance. She could not eat if Leyla did not, for example. Leyla's life and wellbeing have become more important to her than her own, she would insist. Elnara's turning around from the sink at the sound of Leyla's baby noises thus does not surprise. Hearing her child makes Elnara, unhesitatingly yet unintentionally, attend towards Leyla. Affective nationalism unfolds in this moment of encounter between Leyla, Elnara, my felt presence, the music, the TV, the peaceful morning atmosphere and the activation of past experiences through Elnara's becoming excited about Leyla's movements and imitating them. When Elnara begins to extrapolate Leyla's corporeal moves, affective nationalism plays out through the affirmation and reproduction of embodied national knowledge and also through the circulation and transformation of this knowledge between bodies. The moment of affective encounter magnifies the bodily performance of a young girl in Azerbaijan – moving rhythmically, extending her arms to both sides and rotating her wrists inwards – into a meaningful gesture. Leyla's movements spark joyful corporeal devotion in her mother. I read Elnara's facial expression and corporeal performance as signs of bodily joy and enthusiasm about Leyla's bodily activity. Whereas Elnara and I both enjoy seeing Leyla move in a specific way, I am happy because the moment confirms my knowledge of Azerbaijani culture. Experiencing the moment as a cheerful moment also connects me with Elnara and Leyla. Even if I do not share the bodily enjoyment of moving my body the way Leyla and Elnara do, I feel connected to them through sharing the happiness of the moment. Unlike my own experience with the music, I suggest that Elnara feels happy because her child is happy.

Moreover, by encouraging her daughter with the words 'Dance, Leyla! Dance!' she identifies Leyla's movements as a dance. In Azerbaijan, folk dancing counts as a popular and positively connoted activity. The affective encounter with the music and the activation of bodily histories engender a norm of female dancing in Azerbaijan. Leyla's corporeal moves and Elnara's reaction connects them to a community of women in Azerbaijan whose sense of sharing the enjoyment of dancing in a specific nationalised way unites them. Since dancing works as expression of specific bodily skills, it 'works well as [a] case of the performative "doing" of identity and social identifications'

(Nash 2000, 659). The knowledge of what to do and how to move body parts and the embodied repetition of these movements, emerge in those moments when different bodies and objects connect and disconnect through affect. Yet, dancing receives its national label not just through a corporeal gesture as such. Rather, the 'expression' of combinations, sequences and flows of different practices and bodies, attributes the dancing its 'national distinctiveness' (Wood 2012, 204). National dancing, then, materialises as 'an "everywhereness [of] experience where everyone is in relation [and] implicated' (Tahhan 2013, 49). The dancing does not happen through or with one or several distinct bodies, but in its relationality between different bodies and objects. Simonsen (2013, 17) specifies this mode of bodily interrelatedness as follows:

> One does not perceive another body as a material object; rather, one is affected by the meaning of its appearance. The other body is animated and its animation communicates and calls for response.

As a consequence, shared national practices, such as the specific way of female dancing, appeal precisely because their performances reach beyond individual and seemingly knowledgeable bodies and involve people through activating bodily histories.

In the described encounter, embodied affect hence performs three different roles: confusion, attention and affirmation. First, affect confuses through mobilising different bodies, connecting and disconnecting them. Affect travels through different bodies and objects, such as the specific way of moving hands, the TV emanating sounds and noises and the sun bathing the kitchen in a soft light and creating a sense of peacefulness. Seeing Leyla flailing her arms confuses me. Her rhythmic hopping and rotating wrists draw me away from the singer on the screen. I am confused, as I feel annoyed, excited and jealous at the same time.

Second, affect stimulates corporeal attention. I, for example, turn away from the TV when Leyla's body movements in combination with Elnara's excitement inspire me to become aware of the situation, of the ways in which the music emanating from the TV joins Leyla twisting her hands and hopping in her chair and of how the music and Leyla's performance connect with Elnara's glowing face and the way she imitates Leyla's dancing. Elnara's body parts attend to Leyla in this moment of affective encounter: her body turns around, her face begins to smile, her legs move from left to right, her arms extend and her hands rotate inwards.

Third, affect affirms embodied knowledge. The affective encounters unfolding in the kitchen between Leyla, Elnara, myself, the music and the sunny morning mood activate past experiences of dancing at weddings and watching dance performances on TV and at folk festivals. The sense

of sharing the happiness of the moments through, in particular, Elnara's reaction to Leyla's dancing and my feelings of comfort observing the interaction between Leyla and Elnara suggest that female dancing in Azerbaijan is attributed as something positive and enjoyable. Feelings of national belonging emerge in moments bodies align through sharing a certain orientation towards a practice. Inheriting affective practices such as the imaginary of a specific female dancing style, enables the production of shared feelings for those practices (Ahmed 2010). A shared proximity towards positively evaluated practices, such as the style of female dancing, reproduces the dance and in consequence also the felt experience of sharing practices as an object of affection. Leyla's rhythmic swinging and the twisting of her extended hands, Elnara's joyful calling on Leyla to keep on moving, smiling and rotating her hands in a similar way and my interest in the interaction are 'normatively organised as part of socially recognised routines or affective practices', as Wetherell (2012, 81) claims. Different capacities of bodies in attending to these affective practices in a certain way thus follow George Revill's (2004, 207) observation that through 'the practice of dancing [...] the body is always already symbolically differentiated.'

The moments described in the two vignettes thus show the ways in which affective nationalism develops and makes itself felt through the affective encounter between a specific place, different bodies, sounds, lights and (the absence of) touches. The affective encounter 'evokes and invigorates denied and silenced *embodied* memories' (Dragojlovic 2015, 330 my emphasis) of feeling nationally attached and detached, of sharing and not sharing corporealities and of desiring national belonging, or to put it differently, of wishing to hold a place in the world.

## 4.2 Mirror, mirror, on the wall: who in this land is fairest of all?

Apart from mastering specific corporeal moves that turn, through affective encounters, into experiences of national dancing, the desire of people to belong or to not belong to a specific national community also finds its expression in the ways in which people feel they correspond to nationalised ideals of physical beauty. Indeed, I suggest that feeling beautiful in a specific national context promises to experience national belonging.

It was during a discussion on gender in Azerbaijan that was held in Baku in September 2008 in the context of a summer school I attended that I encountered a specific framing of Azerbaijani female corporeality for the first time. Two female and two male panellists discussed differences and particularities of Azerbaijani women and men. One of the male panellists responded to the question of how he would describe a typical Azerbaijani woman as follows:

> Women are primarily beautiful. All women are beautiful; there are no ugly women. But, Azerbaijani women are the most beautiful also in terms of inner beauty. She [the Azerbaijani woman] is the guardian of the house and of the country. The fact that 90 per cent of Azerbaijani women choose to marry an Azerbaijani man proves this.

By observing that women in Azerbaijan are not just the most beautiful but also in charge of family homes and state territory, he turns women in Azerbaijan into protectors of people and land. Following his perception, women in Azerbaijan bear responsibility for the nation. A specific idea of Azerbaijani femininity and gendered embodiments of nation thus intertwine and call on women in Azerbaijan to care for the nation through being beautiful.

Whereas a study focusing on *what* is labelled as an Azerbaijani tradition, practice or body, would now investigate the markers of Azerbaijani femininities (such as childbearing and housekeeping or complying with Islamic morality, for example), my research developing the notion of affective nationalism is less concerned with the description and distinction of specific skills, attitudes and looks (cf. Balogun 2012 for an insightful example of the productions of Nigerian femininity). Rather, I am interested in the ways in which bodily encounters develop specific ideas of a female corporeality in Azerbaijan. In this section, I explore the affective ways in which bodies become Azerbaijani women through embracing beauty. I thus also discuss how beauty manifests itself as an inherent quality of a western-oriented Azerbaijani femininity. Expanding on Faria (2014a, 320), who suggests that beauty 'offer[s] a rich lens to explore the intimate, embodied and gendered nature of nationalism', I echo Rebecca Coleman and Mónica Moreno Figueroa's (2010, 357) move to perceive beauty 'as an embodied affective process'.

MANDARIN

> *Mandarin* is a café and teahouse for women only. The friend who recommended the place told me it is the only one in Baku. The café is inconspicuously hidden in a residential neighbourhood, somewhat away from the city centre. In order to get in, you have to ring the bell. A camera makes sure only women enter. As the café is in the basement, like most teahouses in Azerbaijan, there are no windows. Mirrors, covering the walls behind the settees, add space and light to the underground atmosphere.
>
> It is around four in the afternoon. I find the emptiness of the place appealing. Two waitresses are chatting at the counter. Five other women around my age or younger relax on soft armchairs in the smoking area. They smoke cigarettes and hookah. I am the only one sitting in the non-smoking area. I am having a cup of tea, writing in my notebook. I like the unexcited atmosphere. Everybody seems relaxed; no staring and no enamoured chit-chat in the corner, as in other cafés. The only male body I spot in the café, smiles at me from a poster on the wall across the room.

All of a sudden, the doorbell chimes. A group of six or seven young women step inside, giggling. They are all spruced up. Fitting dresses, neatly combed and glossy hair, blow-dried curls, artificial nails, bright and even-toned skins, a touch of rouge here, some red lipstick there, flashy bracelets and at times a sparkling ring. Every single item they wear fits in shape, pattern and colour. Their whole body make-up carefully selected. 'Are they beautiful?' I am asking myself in silence.

One of the women speaks to a waitress. They are celebrating her birthday and she asks if they could all sit at one long table. No problem. The waitress pushes two tables in front of the mirrored walls. The group of women moves forward in order to take their seats. As they are taking off their coats some of them catch a glance of their images in the mirrored walls.

Well, no, not exactly. They don't catch their reflections in the mirror. Rather, the mirror attracts them, makes them attend to their mirror images. What they see seems to please. One woman shakes her head slightly and pushes back her hair gently. Turning her face once to the left and once to the right she shyly smiles at her reflection. Another one tries a few poses while straightening up and bringing her right shoulder to the front. Chin down, eyes up. Head tilted towards her right shoulder. On the left, brushing a tenacious strand of hair out of her face as if seducing herself in the mirror. More correcting of poses, picking on dresses, arranging sections of straight brown hair around shoulders, admiring oneself, praising the girlfriend's dress and her slim figure... Why are they paying so much attention to the way they look inside this café? There are not even many other people who could judge on the physical impression they make. I am confused.

One of the women picks up a smartphone from the table. Opening the camera modus she holds the phone an arm length away from her chest and instructs her friends to get ready for pictures. The women being photographed are facing the mirrored wall. Between pictures, while rearranging who is standing next to whom, a few peeks in the mirror; to check, to make sure the carefully arranged countenance is still in place. And then, more pictures with different constellations of bodies next to each other, postures and shoulders moved forward and legs put backward.

As the photo session is done, the young women pass around their smartphones assessing the photographs. I don't hear them comment on the pictures, whether they look gorgeous or could have looked better, for example. They just silently smile at what they see. Do they enjoy looking at themselves? Are they satisfied with their appearances on the pictures? Do they compare their appearance with the other women's looks? Why did they take so many pictures in this café without even granting the location a proper place in the picture? Why did they put so much effort in posing and looking perfect? How come, taking pictures of themselves was the first thing they do, even before sitting down and taking an order?

Many questions are buzzing around my head. Yet, I don't speak them out loudly. It's tempting, but at the same time I feel inhibited to approach the group. I don't know them. Asking them those kinds of questions would feel like violating their privacy.

Eventually, they have all sat down and order drinks and cake. Spirits are running high at their table: excited jabbering, laughing, Aaahs and Ooohs. They seem happy, confident and at ease.

I am irritated. How did I become so absorbed with their make-up, self-adjustments and postures? They, apparently, put a lot of effort into looking good. But, do they look good? Don't they all look alike in some way and thus give up some of their individual appeal? Do I think this way because I don't put as much effort into my physical appearance while, of course, also wanting to be beautiful (field notes from 30 January 2014, in Baku)?

Figure 4: Two young women showing each other pictures of themselves on their smartphones (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014)

Figure 5: A group of young women celebrating a friend's birthday in the women-only teahouse *Mandarin* (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014)

While I discover with *Mandarin* a new refuge to escape from unwanted attention and the crowded Bakuvian streets, it is precisely the tranquillity and unexcitedness of the café that increases my bodily capacities to pay attention to the group of young women entering the place. Even before

they turn to the mirrored walls, their entrance makes me pause for a moment. In contrast to my casual street look and unstyled hair, their smooth, polished and thorough appearance strikes me as bizarre and ordinary, as appealing and boring and as beautiful and not beautiful at the same time. When they discover their mirror images in front of the tables, I get curious why checking their postures, hair and poses is even more important to them than sitting down and ordering. The mirror evolves as a powerful device controlling their priorities, movements and appearances. The process of beautifying corporeal arrangements of hair, garment and postures unfolds through the correspondence between bodies, dresses, colours, lights, mirrored walls, looks and feelings of competing for outstanding feminine beauty. In this moment of bodily encounter, affect is literally performing body-*work*. Yet, how do those dynamics of physical prettifying connect with ideas of female corporeal beauty in Azerbaijan and evoke nationalising functions?

According to Farideh Heyat (2006, 406) for young women in Azerbaijan 'modernity, *muasirlik*, has become synonymous with looking European, reflected in the cult of slimness [...] and in the style of dress, hair and make-up.' I had experienced this many times and as such, the physical appearance the group makes in *Mandarin*, does not surprise me. Wearing garments from international fashion brands, watching one's weight and wearing one's hair straightened and open express a contemporary self-conception of young women in Azerbaijan that contrasts with experiences of identifying as a woman during Soviet times. Elnara (conversation on 28 January 2014, Baku) explains this trend as follows:

> Beauty salons are mushrooming now, because people pay too much attention to their nails and hair. At my mom's time, when they were young, even at her own wedding, she wouldn't go to the hairdresser. It wasn't common. That wasn't a tradition. No one went then. But, within the last five or ten years things have changed. I know people who go to the hairdresser every time they wash their hair. They don't wash their hair at home. Don't you see how everyone has very beautiful hair in the city centre, long and straight hair or with curls at the tips? They *only* get their hair washed at the hairdresser. [...] It is not very expensive. Because you can find a beauty salon at almost every block, it costs only 15 or 25 Manat (about 15 to 25 Euros at the time of research). It depends on the person, of course, but our nation spends a lot of time in the beauty salon.

Within the course of nation formation following the country's independence in 1991, beauty care has become a growing constituent of young middle-class women's everyday life in Azerbaijan. The construction of shopping malls throughout the city of Baku and at the outskirts of regional centres establish increasing possibilities to access a variety of beauty products and clothing identified as Western-European. Paired with this development and the establishment of international retailers and brands, more and more regular options to present oneself groomed for admiration and

confirmation of social status emerge. It has not only become fashionable among middle-class Azerbaijani families to organise a festive event in order to celebrate a child's first birthday. Engagement parties, henna parties, *Qız toyu* and *Oğlan toyu*[2] also expand in extravagancy and costs, inviting guests, in particular female ones, to dress up and to show through the selection of a dress style, a colour or a pattern how far they comply with a social status that requires to wear a different dress at every event, for example. Physical beauty in Azerbaijan, thus turns into a commodity through investing time, money and efforts to maintain a specific glamourous look. In fact, people often equate good and Western-European looks with a certain level of wealth – something desired by many young Azerbaijanis, as high qualifications and academic employment as scientists or doctors, for example, fail to pay for a self-supporting standard of life (Heyat 2002b). Looking good equals being a rich person. In return, that means to be able to live a decent life in present-day Azerbaijan and to increase one's value on the wedding market. In fact, as Nayereh Tohidi (1996, 114) asserts, 'beauty' is considered one of the main 'cultural characteristics attributed to an ideal Azeri woman [as spouse] in secular Soviet Azerbaijan'. Even though many young people I talked to claim that romantic love is the only reason to get married, in depth conversations often revealed the influential role from parents or other powerful members of the family in marriage decisions. Parents in particular focus much more on the financial aspects and social and economic networks a wedding arrangement would yield and control processes of coupling, accordingly.

As a consequence, the wish to marry into a family that guarantees a girl's economic and social status or even improves it, ranks high. As being and looking beautiful moves a person closer to that goal, young middle-class women are eager to adopt a physical appearance that produces compliments and admiration. Beauty as an inherent feature of Azerbaijani femininity, hence, turns into 'a form of affective labour' (Rivers-Moore 2013, 154). Following Megan Rivers-Moore (ibid.), beauty unfolds 'as value, as something that circulates, can be exchanged, might produce more value, and is ultimately relational.' Flowing between different bodies and objects, ideas of physical feminine beauty in Azerbaijan engender atmospheres of competition. Referring to her sister's workplace where a lot of young women work, Elnara (conversation on 28 January 2014, Baku) reasons that:

> They [the young women] all take care of their nails and hair, because they see each other all the time. It's like a competition, you know. You just want to be in shape. Eastern women

[2] *Qız toyu* means the girl's wedding in its literal translation. The family of the girl is hosting the wedding ceremony, usually in order to be able to invite all relevant members of the girl's family and circle of friends and acquaintances, including for example friends and colleagues of the parents, neighbours and friends of the bride's siblings, that are not invited at the *Oğlan toyu*, the boy's wedding when the bride's family side is usually only allowed to invite, for example 50 people from their side, that is to say, the closest or the most important family members of the bride's family.

> have always paid attention to their looks. Now, it just gets more and more popular and you see how *everyone* does it. It gets more and more important.

Compared to the situation in the early 1990s, the majority of young women, at least in urban areas, works full-time today apart from their duties of maintaining the household and taking care of the family's children. Even though female employment rates were relatively high in the Soviet Union, women in Azerbaijan were more confined to the house and to hidden working spaces. As 'chastity' (Heyat 2006, 397) ranked and still ranks high among the characteristics of the ideal Azerbaijani woman, a working woman during Soviet times, did not necessarily have contact with customers or business partners, for example. Changing employment standards following the break-up of the Soviet Union alters young women's public presences. Today, young women in Azerbaijan often work in the service and trading sectors (Heyat 2006). Working as an assistant for a telecommunication company, however, entails a different bodily exposure in public than running a tailor business in a rear chamber. Taking public transport to the work place, having a business lunch in the food court of a nearby shopping mall or meeting customers imply a new regularity of public activities and attention that influence the way young women perceive of themselves and others. Following Elnara, it has always been important for young women to take care of their looks in public. The condition of feeling to be in public, however, emerges as new normalcy and demands a different attention towards dressing, hairstyle and general physical appearance in order to meet the requirements of a desired female beauty.

The ways in which a woman presents her body outside the household thus come to matter as the expectation of an Azerbaijani femininity, which embraces beauty as a naturally desirable condition unfolding within encounters between different people on the street, in the supermarket, at work or when meeting friends in a café. I follow Coleman and Figueroa (2010, 361 emphasis in original) in stressing that 'beauty [...] is a bodily inclination; not located *in* anything (as content) but a process which *exists as* and is *produced through* the relations between bodies, things, memories, dreams and hopes.' Ideas of physical beauty as a quality inherent to Azerbaijani femininity thus develop through encounters between different bodies, objects and places. Beauty as an affective, embodied process, however, does not determine a fixed or measurable category of feminine identification. To feel beautiful evolves through relations between different bodies and objects. Individual bodily features such as straightened and glossy hair, crystals included in the nail design or a slim figure do not amount to an experience of feminine beauty in Azerbaijan per se. Rather, the emergence of affective beauty entails moments of comparing hair, of assessing the fit between a skin tone and the colour of a dress or of abandoning oneself into one's own mirror image.

As a result, the affective encounters I enliven through the vignette cultivate the development of beauty as an inherent element of a middle-class, secular, Western-oriented idea of female corporeality in Azerbaijan. Through embracing beauty as embodied shared normality the moment of affective encounter between the mirrored walls, the place, the reflections, the women, the make-up and straightened long hair activates as well as validates a specific idea of female corporeality. The young women 'become a tangible way to envision the nation, constructed in idealized national forms that provide tangible bodies over which national pride may be expressed' (Faria 2010, 230). As beautifying practices, such as the ones I observed in *Mandarin* – for example, removing a strand of hair out of the face or straightening up the torso in front of a mirror – unfold within situated moments of affective encounter between different bodies and objects, they trigger certain concepts of a desired female corporeality in Azerbaijan. Beauty, as affective and embodied process, produces and connects specific bodies with specific national knowledge. Feelings of national belonging and alienation emerge through the ways in which the young women in *Mandarin* carefully arrange their hair, check upon their make-up and correct their posture. Young women who are taking care of themselves and only emerge in public when prettified accordingly, thus, not only reproduce conventional ideas of female Azerbaijani bodies but also strengthen prevailing corporealities in experiencing belonging or alienation to nation in Azerbaijan through feeling beautiful or not.

What the affective moments revisited through the vignette help me point out is that not just beauty pageants, soap operas and glossies engender beautiful bodies that emerge as materially produced national representations. Rather, a specific corporeal beauty promising feelings of national belonging, manifests as an embodied, affective experience of everyday life. Affective nationalism is thus first and foremost a bodily capacity not only because affect moves through bodies connecting and disconnecting them, but also because it are bodies, understood as momentary arrangements of intensities of feelings, that affect and are affected per se.

## 4.3 Conclusion: emergent bodies constituting nation

The exploration of the different ways in which moments of affective encounter produce national bodies, as, indeed, bearers of national feelings and meanings demonstrates that national bodies or gestures suggesting a specific national significance are not pre-given constituents of banal encounters in everyday life. Rather, bodies emerge as bodies constituting the nation through a specific situational configuration of different bodies, objects and places. The mere dancing or performance of corporeal moves does neither turn a body into a national body nor transform

embodied experiences into national experiences. National knowledge emerges in the space unfolding in-between encountering bodies and objects – be it the knowledge about a nationally appreciated way of female dancing or a nationally desired corporeal appearance.

Different capacities of bodies to affect and to be affected as well as the specific situation and locality of affective encounters are thus key to understand the emergence of communities of shared national consent. Within the conceptual quartet of an affective nationalism, the mechanism of embodying ranks first as the production of bodies with different affective capacities infuses the other processes of orienting, binding and persisting.

# 5 De/attaching bodies, objects, practices and nation

> *In the east the fields of Karabagh disappeared into the dusty deserts of Azerbeidshan. The glowing breath of Zarathustra's fire swept across the plain on the wings of the desert wind. But no leaf in the grove around us stirred, it was as if the gods of the classical ages had departed just a moment ago and the enchantment still lingered on.*
>
> *— Kurban Said, Ali and Nino (2000, 50)*

Affective nationalism wants to understand why it is so difficult to resist nationalist thinking and feeling. If nationalist thinking and feeling works through aligning different people, objects, practices and places, as I argue, then the question arises: How do people, objects, practices and places align? What holds nations together? What makes people stick together? If it is habits, rituals and shared practices that align different bodies, objects and places, how can these practices develop and most importantly, how do these practices develop as something that makes me want to stick to them, to repeat them and to willingly embrace them? If it is an everyday activity such as having breakfast that connects me with some people and disconnects me with others, how come I think little about preparing cereals, croissants and bread and cheese for breakfast instead of baked beans, rice and soup? If it is values that attach me to an imagined community of people and detach me from another, what makes me consider drinking black tea all day long an unhealthy habit? If it is the routine performance of rituals that include some people while excluding others, I wonder how repeating a practice makes people feel belonging to or alienation from a community?

In the moment I experience the feeling of a national community – such as an Azerbaijani national community, a Swiss or a German one – through eating a certain dish, gazing at a specific landscape or speaking with people in a particular language, bodies, objects, practices and places attach and detach, coalescing into orders of significances and insignificances. The aim of this chapter is to unravel the affective mechanisms at work in producing national communities through attaching and detaching ideas with bodies, values with practices or rituals with objects. As I suggest in this chapter, affective encounters between different bodies, objects and practices at certain times and places (re)produce orders of national significances and insignificances. National communities evolve through unifying different bodies, objects and practices with these orders of significances and insignificances. Hence, the chapter ties in with the fourfold concept of affective nationalism:

emergent bodies constituting nation need to orient themselves towards each other and need to be oriented in order to engender experiences of national collectivity.

I propose that it is the enchantment of nationalised rituals and objects that mesmerise and have the potential to unite different people. In order to understand the ways in which nationalising practices enchant, I relive my experiences of celebrating *Novruz Bayramı* in Azerbaijan within the realms of two families I lived with, in the first part of the chapter. Pointing to the ritualistic and repetitive enactments of this national, public holiday that enchant ideas about *Novruz Bayramı* and thus about the felt community of Azerbaijanis, I argue that nation becomes an irresistible experience because of its potential to draw different bodies in. The experience of the Azerbaijani nation that unfolds within the affective encounters of *Novruz Bayramı* fascinates. In those moments when people enjoy the ritualistic and repetitive practices of celebrating *Novruz Bayramı* they connect with other people feeling and doing *Novruz Bayramı* in a similar way. The experience of nation becomes an enjoyable one as it reproduces itself through the delight taken in celebrating *Novruz Bayramı*.

The charm of the nation, however, does not only evolve around the celebration of public and institutionalised national holidays such as *Novruz Bayramı*. In the second part of the chapter I explore the ways in which fire emerges as a quality defining Azerbaijani national mythology through turning ordinary or festive engagements with fire into enactments of the nation. I argue that fire enchants through its ambivalent force of pleasing and menacing.

As my empirical example in the third part of the chapter shows, an enchanted sense of nation develops through the 'little things' (Thrift 2000b, 380) that constitute the banal performances of everyday life. Drawing on a less institutionalised example of producing felt experiences of belonging to a national community, I discuss how the banal encounter with an odour, or to be more precise with the smell of burnt *üzərlik,* stimulates delight and nostalgia with my research partners and disgust and the anticipation of sickness with me. In my analysis of the affective encounter with the odour I explore ways in which things become objects of love or of hate through addressing processes of orienting towards different bodies, objects and practices.

## 5.1 The enchantment of *Novruz Bayramı*

For all of my conversation partners, *Novruz Bayramı* counts as the most important holiday in Azerbaijan. It is a ritualistic, yet exceptional event that elates people through preparing and eating certain foods and performing specific customs. Everybody I talked to honoured it. It was not

uncommon for my conversation partners to say something like 'I love *Novruz*. It's my favourite holiday!' As *Novruz*, in contrast to the majority of other holidays, is neither perceived as a Muslim holiday nor as a political holiday, its celebration has the potential to unify a majority of people, regardless of their cultural, religious, socio-economic, political, gender, age or racial positioning. Samir, one of my informants in Baku, specifies *Novruz'* greatness as follows:

> I think it [Novruz] is the only colourful holiday we have [...]. I don't really like these religious holidays, like *Qurban Bayrami*[3] or something like that, when you have to sacrifice a lamb. Whenever I think of other holidays they seem to me like something dark and something ordinary. But when it comes to *Novruz*, I feel very impressed. I really like this holiday because we meet as a family and the women meet with the men. In a sense it is binding. It binds all relatives; the women and men all together. And, I don't know, it seems to me that something like *Novruz* makes me feel that I am not just the product of this recent nation state, the Republic of Azerbaijan of 1991. But, that I have something from ancient times, because of the fire and all the things we do at *Novruz*. But, I don't know why it is so appreciated by the people...? *(He pauses for a while as if developing a thought before he continues speaking).*
>
> Maybe, because people begin to prepare for this on these four Tuesdays that we have. I don't know. Maybe, because we consider it as a *new* year for us. Something new. I don't know (transcript from conversation on 17 March 2014, Baku).

Samir connects *Novruz* with colourfulness, with excitement and with meeting all his relatives, as for once gender segregation in celebrating an event does not matter. In addition, in referring to 'ancient times' he rationalises how *Novruz* makes him feel like being a part of a community that existed, and indeed historically developed, beyond the recent independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1991 from Soviet rule. *Novruz Bayrami* thus emerges as a joyful and integrating event that bears the potential of producing a sense of belonging to a community of Azerbaijanis.

Yet, when trying to articulate people's fascination with the *Novruz* event, Samir fails to find the right words that account for the feelings about *Novruz Bayrami*. He tries to justify people's appreciation of *Novruz* by referring to the preparation of the event, and thus its ritualistic character, and to its idea of embracing something new. At some point, however, he seems to get beyond the possibilities to put into words what he actually wants to say. His 'I don't know' reads like a confession of incompleteness and insufficiency. Rereading his statements and similar comments made by some of my other informants, I am left with a set of questions: Why do people love

[3] *Qurban Bayrami* is the Islamic Festival of Sacrifice.

*Novruz*? What are people doing that makes them like *Novruz* so much? How does doing *Novruz* unite people and engender a sense of belonging (or not belonging) to a national community? In the following three subsections I try to find answers to these questions by approaching the characteristics of *Novruz Bayram* and its power to delight step by step.

## *What is* Novruz Bayramı*?*

Once a year, throughout the month of March, people in Azerbaijan celebrate the public holiday *Novruz Bayram*. The basic idea of the festivities is to welcome spring. While the festival culminates on 20 or 21 March[4], the spring equinox on the Northern hemisphere, people get ready for *Novruz Bayram* weeks before, for example by thoroughly cleaning the house, preparing specific dishes, meeting relatives and celebrating the four elements – earth, water, wind and fire – at the four Tuesday evenings preceding 20 or 21 March. These preparations for the *Novruz* festivity are charged with ritualistic practices. After sunset on the four preceding Tuesdays, for example, young men light bonfires on the streets that attract passers-by, neighbours and family members to gather around the fires and become mesmerised by the dancing flames (Figure 6).

Figure 6: People celebrating the second Tuesday before *Novruz* on a street in Göygöl (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014)

Figure 7: Diamond-shaped almond *Paxlava* in the front and a plate with *Şəkərbura, Şor Qoğal* and other pastries in the back. Picture taken in Göygöl (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2011)

[4] Some of my research partners explained that people in Baku would celebrate the main *Novruz* day on the eve of 20 March whereas people in regional areas would celebrate the main *Novruz* day on the eve of 21 March. Some of my research partners, however, claimed that they had never heard of this urban-rural distinction of commemorating the main *Novruz* celebration on different days and insisted on its celebration on the night from 20 to 21 March.

Women bake specific pastries, such as in particular *Paxlava*, *Şəkərbura* and *Şor Qoğal* (Figure 7) for the festivities and compose a *Novruz Xonça* made of *Səməni* (Figure 8 and 9) and specific dried fruits such as *innab*, *idə* and *xurma*[5] (Figure 9).

Figure 8: *Xonça* with *Səməni* (sprouted wheat) in the centre in a private household in Sumquait (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

Figure 9: Elnara preparing a *Xonça* for Leyla, distributing *innab*, *idə* and *xurma* on a plate (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

While preparing her household and herself for *Novruz Bayramı* in 2014, Elnara explains to me that the *Xonça* – an assorted plate of sweets featuring *Səməni*, sprouted wheat that is bounded with a red ribbon – is one of the central and, for her, also one of the most beloved things to prepare for *Novruz Bayramı*. As she is taking her time in carefully selecting, cleaning and sorting fruits, sweets and nuts for the *Xonça* she assembles for Leyla (Figure 9), she reveals that 'the most important aspect of a *Xonça* is, that it is colourful and is composed of seven different things.'

Elnara's description of *Novruz'* colourfulness and the significance of the number seven reflect in part how people understand the *Novruz* holiday and its characteristics across national borders. *Novruz*[6] counts as a cultural holiday that different people commemorate in various parts of the world (Zamani-Farahani 2013). In 2009, the UNESCO registered 'Novruz, Nowruz, Nooruz, Navruz, Nauroz, Nevruz' as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization 2009) and thus established a platform that both

[5] *Innab, idə* and *xurma* are small round dried fruits. *Innab* and *idə* have a red colour. *Xurma* is blackish. They are considered to be explicit titbits for *Novruz Bayramı*.

[6] As I have experienced the *Novruz* event as an Azerbaijani national-cultural tradition I will stick to it's spelling in Azerbaijani as N-o-v-r-u-z, even when referring to scholars who discuss *Novruz* within an Iranian cultural and national context and would usually spell *Novruz* as N-o-w-R-u-z, for example.

legitimises and cherishes the cultural heritage of different *Novruz* celebrations across the globe. Even though most common understandings of *Novruz* celebrations mark it as an event of Persian origin and as a mainly Iranian festival (Zamani-Farahani 2013), I experienced the two *Novruz* celebrations I have attended so far in Göygöl (2011) and in Baku (2014) as departing from the ways in which Hamira Zamani-Farahani (2013) or Nazanin Naraghi and Paul Kingsbury (2013) – referring to its expression as Iranian cultural heritage – depict its rituals and detail its procedures. Whereas basic ideas, such as the festivals' Zoroastrian origin, the centrality of fire and food and a focus of celebrating *Novruz* within the circle of the family and close relatives, coincide with my experiences around *Novruz Bayramı* in Azerbaijan, the specificities of, for example, the ways in which people actually engage with fire rituals or prepare and assort certain foods, greatly vary.

It is precisely these small differences of the actual enactment of *Novruz* traditions that mobilise the event's potential to equip people with a sense of national belonging that develops beyond the idea of sharing a culture of commemorating the *Novruz* holiday. As I suggest for the case of Azerbaijan, *Novruz Bayramı* unfolds as an arena of affective encounters engendering, shaping and cultivating the unmistakable yet phantasmagoric experience of an Azerbaijani national identity. Through bodily performances and visceral experiences of banal yet enjoyable *Novruz* practices, *Novruz Bayramı* emerges as distinct national quality. But how does performing *Novruz* rituals and inducing *Novruz* rhetoric trigger affective enjoyments of Azerbaijani nationhood? And what does this enjoyment of *Novruz* actually look like?

## *Why enjoy* Novruz Bayramı*?*

To comprehend people's delight in the *Novruz* event I recall a conversation I had with Elnara a few days before the culmination of the *Novruz* celebrations on 20 March 2014 in Baku. I have crafted a vignette in order to situate the enthusiasm about and the enchantment of *Novruz Bayramı.*

NOVRUZ BAYRAMI

> We are on our way to Nasiya Khala, Ilgar's mother, to join a family get-together and a traditional *Novruz* dinner with Plov – a rice dish with lamb, dried fruits, chestnuts and caramelised onions – and the seven different *Novruz* sweets – dried fruits and pastries – for dessert. It is the last Tuesday before the final *Novruz* celebration on 20 March, evening rush hour in Baku and the roads are packed with cars. Passing the temporary chaos composed of cracked concrete, dust and redecorated, luminous old buildings along the streets, the line of vehicles makes its way through the city.

> I am sitting next to Elnara in the back of Ilgar's SUV. He is driving his flashy black car, which fits perfectly into the scenery of Baku's streets, full of the latest models of prestigious brands in black or white. The interior of the car is spacious. I am feeling the soft leather of the seats press against my skin. Elnara and Ilgar are chatting about meeting the family. Elnara holds their little daughter Leyla on her lap. Her arms are wrapped around the small body, rocking her in gentle moves.
>
> *Novruz Bayramı* has been constantly on our minds for the past four weeks. I have spent hours watching Elnara, her mother or one of her aunts prepare different sweets and decorations for the holiday. As I think about the upcoming evening, I, too, feel excited. We are finally close to the big celebration of *Novruz*, after all the preparation and talking about it.
>
> I meet Elnara's gaze and smile at her. She beams back at me – as always. Rocking her little girl from left to right she asks:
>
> "You know what is special about our holiday?"
>
> It was a rhetorical question, because she keeps on talking without waiting for my answer.
>
> "We adults don't do anything special, like the children, who are chasing around for sweets. But we are all *feeling* special." She halts and chuckles before she continues.
>
> "Everybody is just in a good mood. We are kind of shining from inside." A smile flits across her face and as she is saying this, I imagine spotting a glimpse of her inner gleam of light. I have to grin.
>
> "Do you feel like this on other holidays as well?", I ask.
>
> She shakes her head.
>
> "For me it has always been *Novruz Bayramı*. Today my mum and my aunt cooked *Paxlava* together. They said it was a pity I couldn't be there to cut it. I always cut the *Paxlava*….", she pauses, "....but with the baby…?!" Her voice sounds wistful now. I imagine her preparing *Paxlava* with her mum and aunt – one of three kinds of pastries women in Azerbaijan prepare for *Novruz Bayramı*. How they would carefully stack thin layers of pastry, nuts, and honey to build a thick, flat carpet of the finest *Paxlava*; how they would place shapely whole nuts on top of the last layer; and how Elnara would cut the *Paxlava* into regular diamond shapes. I can feel how she would have loved to celebrate her personal *Novruz* ritual this year as well (field notes from 19 March 2014, Baku).

In this moment of affective encounter, the different bodies in the car, the memory of rituals, a smile, words and the recollection of a taste converge and allow for the becoming of something else: a momentary indulgence in the joyfulness of *Novruz Bayramı*. Pleasure and longing fill the air

as the car is carrying the passengers closer to the meeting with their loved ones. Elnara relishes in contemplating *Novruz Bayram* – in imagining meeting her family, cooking together, savouring the sweetness of *Paxlava*. I, too, indulge in the affection, the radiant joy drawing me in.

The embodied practices emerging in this momentary configuration of different objects and bodies constitute visceral feelings of national enjoyment. Elnara's memory of the different steps of preparing *Paxlava* and the imagined action of cutting the *Paxlava* link up with her smile, and rocking her daughter in gentle moves with her arms wrapped around her. Likewise, my perception of bodily comfort, as I am settled in the spacious automobile, while the space outside the car looks cramped and filthy, adds to my happiness. Like the car envelops its passengers in a protective way, the anticipation to celebrate *Novruz* intensifies the feeling of the comforting sphere of the family, creating a sense of family togetherness. For the enjoyment of the *Novruz* holiday, our shared anticipation of celebrating *Novruz* becomes even more important than the actual enactment of ritualistic practices. The mere prospect of celebrating this holiday promises joy. After all, our anticipation, our fantasies about celebrating together does not disappoint, but promises to satisfy what we expect from the celebration of this national holiday. The affection stimulates the momentary emergence of past experiences through the somatic reminiscence of the pleasure in the actual practice of cooking and eating.

When Elnara and I enliven corporeal experiences of *Novruz* practices trough immersing ourselves in *Novruz* reminiscences I refer to an understanding of enjoyment that is inspired by but not limited to Lacan's concept of *jouissance* to understand the perpetuating allures of national identification (Kingsbury 2011; Proudfoot 2010; Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006; Žižek 1993). I take the idea of enjoyment as a many-sided experience of the sense of self in the world that makes people like, repeat and yearn for things: enjoyment is at the same time cruel by taking something dear away and pleasant in misguiding to be able to fully experience absolute joy. I, however, apprehend enjoyment also as a corporeal trace of affective encounters that may find its partial expression in, for example, moments of smiling, radiating, hugging, reminiscing or feeling how the heart fills with warmth. I suggest to speak of affective enjoyment when a moment of bodily encounter incites the enjoyment of a touch, a memory or a taste that feels fascinating and mysterious at the same time. In the moment the reminiscence about *Novruz* rituals or the corporeal act of transforming a plate of *Paxlava* into identical diamond shaped pastries confirms feelings of national attachment, an analysis of the affective enjoyment of practicing *Novruz Bayram* helps to comprehend the enchantment of materially produced representations and imaginations of nation.

Elnara's enjoyment is twofold: she enjoys the national speciality while at the same time her enjoyment remains incomplete. Her wistful remembering of past *Novruz* celebrations reveals how the enjoyment of being a mother to her child and of celebrating *Novruz* the way she used to are both lacking and contradictory. This shows how bodies resonate with affective encounters in multiple ways resulting from differences in bodily becomings. Since she had a child, Elnara has faced the celebration of the *Novruz* holiday from an unfamiliar perspective. She feels trapped in a mood of conflicting sentiments making her miss the bodily practices of cutting *Paxlava* at the same time as she deeply loves her child. The celebrations of *Novruz Bayramı* become a gendered affective experience. My excitement about the upcoming festivities reveals how, as a woman, I am becoming part of a female 'we' aligned with Elnara, her mother and her aunts who are preparing the special *Novruz* pastries, dishes and decorations.

My claim that *Novruz* unfolds as a gendered affective experience does not controvert what Samir stated earlier about the binding character of *Novruz* celebrations – for him, *Novruz* is the one holiday that brings all women and men of a family together. Rather, I maintain that these moments of togetherness perpetuate undisputed gender segregation in Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that all members of a family meet for *Novruz Bayramı* and sit around one table at the same time to enjoy the same food, the seating arrangements and the order of toasting as well as the preparations and follow-ups of the celebrations are sexually hierarchised and strictly split between female and male responsibilities. While preparing the food, setting and decorating the table and doing the dishes after the feast remains the duty of the female members of the family, the male host, such as the son or the father, usually sit at the end of the table and are in charge of speaking the first toast. It is also often younger men's responsibility to assemble timber and branches and set up and spark off the *Novruz* bonfire in the backyard. In the families within which I attended *Novruz* celebrations, it was also only the men who received a shot glass to clink glasses filled with vodka.

Obeying the implicitly gendered codes of conduct fosters the enjoyment of doing *Novruz Bayramı* and thus the feeling of belonging to a national community of Azerbaijanis. When Elnara once told me that she likes taking care of the household, the child and subordinating her work as a freelance designer to her domestic duties – I remember her saying 'I love to serve my husband' – I recall how I momentarily dismissed her message. At first, I was irritated as her statement sounded submissive and self-degrading to me. The more I lived with Elnara and Ilgar and spent time with other families, the more I reassessed my initial judgment. At least since the shaping of social values under Soviet rule, the family has materialised as the core societal institution in Azerbaijan. According to Heyat (2002a, 7), 'the workings of the social, economic and political system in the

Soviet era led to a privileging of "private" over "public" in the acquisition of power and meaning' in Azerbaijan. During the current post-Soviet era, happily presenting oneself as an active part of a family and contributing to sustaining family life continue to manifest important criteria of feeling accepted and inherently belonging to a national community of Azerbaijanis.

As the family as the small-scale equivalent of the national body (Wilkinson 2013) is the realm where the celebration of the *Novruz* holiday is placed, it does not surprise that for Samir, Elnara and myself the experience of *Novruz Bayram* intensifies the wish to commemorate the holiday within (our) families. Through commemorating *Novruz* rituals the space of family refuges links up with the intimate nation space (Caluya 2011).

While Ilgar, as a husband and father does not only take the responsibility of being the bread winner of his small family but also the protector of Elnara and Leyla, he also fulfils his duties as a son to his mother Nasiya Khala. He is in in charge of driving Elnara and Leyla safely around the city. It is a small detail, but remember that in the vignette only Ilgar sits in the front of the car. He performs his role as the family's 'male figurehead' (Heyat 2002a, 175) while Elnara, Leyla and myself, as the female and thus to be protected members of the family, enjoy the car ride from the back seats. By taking us to Nasiya Khala in order to celebrate the *Novruz* holiday with his parents and siblings, instead of driving us to Elnara's parents and siblings, he acts according to societal expectations prioritising patrilocality over matrilocality (Heyat 2002a, 63). Although Ilgar, Elnara and Leyla do not live with Ilgar's parents, social rules expect them to maintain close relationships with them. Ilgar and Elnara, however, do not experience their conforming with these social expectations as a burden. After all, Elnara shares her anticipation about the *Novruz* celebration on our way to her mother-in-law.

Hence, in the instance described in the vignette, bodies carry out what society expects from them including the reproduction of dominant gender and family norms as mother, father, daughter or son, celebrating *Novruz* with specific rituals, within the family and at a certain time and most importantly the 'promise of happiness' (Ahmed 2010) of this family encounter. In this happiness about *Novruz Bayram* – that means the wish to and the joy of complying with the social expectations and tacit rules the family context requires – the nation comes to live as something positive and desirable. *Novruz Bayram* becomes a national object in a swirl of shared joy in moments of affective encounter. The nation here is reproduced through the intimate space of the family turning into a 'felt community' (Ahmed 2004, 101) that emerges in moments of national affection. Feelings of deprivation or threat that might likewise emerge from encountering materially produced representations of *Novruz Bayram*, however, remain excluded.

In identifying *Novruz Bayramı* as a distinct holiday and *Paxlava* as a pastry cooked for a special occasion, the national meaningfulness of the moment evolves through a shared visceral knowledge. The affective becoming of bodies and objects intensifies the dynamics of national signification. The visceral enjoyment of the moment would be less passionate if people did not share their understanding of celebrating a certain holiday. At the same time, people would become less joyfully attached to the national holiday if it was just about the authoritative imposition of a specific national ideology. The annual celebration of Heydar Aliyev's[7] birthday on 10 May, for instance, brims over with official meaning-making, but lacks in corporeal conviviality. Even though the birthday is celebrated throughout the country, people rejoice less in it than in *Novruz Bayramı*. I learned that civil servants are forced to attend the ceremonies. Some parents like to take their children to the Heydar Aliyev square in the city centre of Baku because they can visit the elaborate flower decorations installed there for this day for free. But, apart from that, people increasingly resent the excessive staging of Heydar Aliyev's gloriousness. Consequently, the two holidays evoke different degrees of belonging to an imagined community of Azerbaijanis. While celebrating *Novruz Bayramı*, however, the Azerbaijani nation becomes through the idea of a shared and visceral euphoria that allows for a unification of people.

Samir finds a similar answer to the question of why *Novruz* is of paramount importance to people in Azerbaijan:

> I think [...] why it's liked by people [...], maybe because it's the only holiday that is considered ours. You know, it came from other things. It's not from Islam. Some other holidays, like, take Constitution Day, for example. Nobody considers that a holiday. Or, Independence Day, for example, is not so well known. But when it comes to *Novruz* it is something like *my* holiday. I feel a very strong connection (transcript from conversation on 17 March 2014, Baku).

*Novruz* materialises as a joyful event through its felt inimitableness. In contrast to the indifference and rejection Samir maintains towards other public holidays such as Constitution Day or Independence Day, he appropriates *Novruz Bayramı* and makes it his own holiday. The cultivation of positive connotations and enthusiastic rituals constituting *Novruz* celebrations invoke the holiday as a main marker to identify with Azerbaijan. As celebrations of the holiday are mainly staged within private spaces, the political project of utilising the holiday to consolidate national cohesion and people's joyful attachments to a sense of Azerbaijanihood often remains hidden. I suggest,

[7] From 1993 until his death in 2003, Heydar Aliyev was president of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He is the father of incumbent president Ilham Aliyev.

however, that Samir's sense of ourness and his strong connection with *Novruz Bayramı* also evolve from concealed promotions of national ideologies that establish the *Novruz* holiday as an inherent national quality. As I demonstrate in the next section, official nation-building propaganda exploits the fascination with *Novruz* celebrations, and in particular with the symbol of fire, in order to enmesh people in a specific nation state ideology.

## *Politicising* Novruz Bayramı *or how to amuse the nation*

National propaganda increasingly penetrates the intimate *Novruz* celebrations within families. Apart from an increasing commercialisation of the holiday – supermarkets, for example, trumpet special holiday deals – media advertising and public entertainment shows establish the holiday as a leading cultural event that aims both at uniting people in Azerbaijan regardless of their sexual, gender, ethnic, religious, political or socio-economic identification and at distinguishing the Azerbaijani nation from other nations as a community of people with unique, valuable and enviable ancestry.

On the one hand, visual representations of *Novruz Bayramı* are used to link the celebration of the holiday to the political ideology of the current Aliyev government. During the *Novruz* celebrations in 2014, for example, I observed how all state-sponsored TV stations (which are in many households 100 per cent of all TV stations people receive) broadcasted *Novruz* activities in different cities and villages across the country all day long. With a portrait of former president Heydar Aliyev on the emblem of the Azerbaijani flag permanently fixed in the upper left corner of the TV screen (Figure 10), the state-owned station AzTV subtly reminds the watcher of the ideological context of the TV show. Virtually as prime example of Billig's (1995, 38) unnoticed yet enduring 'flagging' of the nation, the ways in which the rituals and practices constituting *Novruz Bayramı* emerge only in connection to the picture of Heydar Aliyev, suggest that the rediscovery and public worship and appreciation of *Novruz Bayramı* depend and are in fact entangled with his leadership.

On the other hand, *Novruz* events and representations of the holiday that address and engage an international in addition to the domestic audience receive support. The Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for example, sponsors the youth organisation AEGEE-Bakı[8], which started to host 'Novruz – International Youth Festival' in 2014, according to their page on Facebook (2015). The activities of the youth organisation echo the attempts of governmental propaganda to brand Azerbaijan as a nation state that manages to unite diversity and override

[8] AEGEE-Bakı, founded in 2004, is part of the European student organisation AEGEE (Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe the European).

contradictions. This nation state narration became most obvious through international advertising during the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) 2012 that was held in Baku (Militz 2016). The ESC 2012 media campaign staged Azerbaijan as a place that complements tradition and modernity, conservatism and progress and welcomes cosmopolitans as well as moralists. The campaign contained several references to the ways in which people in different regions of Azerbaijan celebrate *Novruz Bayrami* making the holiday evolve as a core tradition of the local national culture.


Figure 10: Freeze frame of AzTV broadcasting on 21 March 2014 (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

## 5.2 Azerbaijan: land of fire

In fact, the ESC 2012 media campaign established fire – a central element in the *Novruz* mythology – as its key symbol. The slogan, 'Light your fire!', in combination with an orange-yellowish drawing of flames constituted the official logo of the ESC 2012 (Figure 11), for example. Among the many other repetitive enactments and representation of flames, one of the most impressive visualisations of fire occurred during the life performance of the Azerbaijani contestant, Sabina Babayeva. The singer performed her song in a white dress that gradually, as the music developed, took on different colours. When the song reached its climax her dress literally looked ablaze (Figure 12). An article on the official Eurovision Website reporting about a rehearsal performance, describes the imagery

of Sabina's stage show as 'kinetic and fiery' (Storvik-Green 2012). The fact that she did not sing about fire or flames at all did not derogate the dazzling transformations of her dress.


Figure 11: Official logo of the ESC 2012 (European Broadcasting Union and Ictimai TV 2012b).

Figure 12: The ESC 2012 contestant for Azerbaijan, Sabina Babayeva, during her live performance at the final competition (European Broadcasting Union and Ictimai TV 2012a).

Certainly, fire in Azerbaijan maintains several associations in particular also beyond the ESC 2012. As I have mentioned before, fire plays a central role both in characterising the traditions of the *Novruz* holiday by founding it in Zoroastrian mythology and in acting out *Novruz* rituals by sparking fires and jumping across flames. In addition, Azerbaijan is mainly known for its natural gas and oil fields. Gas and oil's combustible property is considered one of the main, if not *the* main benefit of these fossil materials. A popular tourist attraction on the Absheron peninsula, for example, is *Yanar Dağ*, the burning mountain in its literal translation. When I visited the place in 2007 for the first time, I experienced *Yanar Dağ* as an eternal flame of about four to five meters in length and two meters in height on a small slope in a rugged and sparse landscape. I remember how the owner of an adjacent little kiosk told me that the rocks and the earth are burning here because of the natural gas occurences in place. In the distant past a thunderbolt hit the place, according to the legend. The combustible properties of the natural gas captured in the rocks encountered the thunderbolt and ignited a fire that has burnt ever since without been extinguished. Fire and flames, thus, do not only constitute *Novruz* rituals but the mythology around Azerbaijani national territory. As in particular the enactment of fire rituals during *Novruz* celebrations, such as lighting candles in the centre of a *Xonça* during a *Novruz* dinner (Figure 13), incite affective enjoyments, or, to put it

differently, the enchantment of the holiday, *Novruz Bayramı* develops subtly and sympathetically as a core quality of experiencing Azerbaijani nationhood through this very focus on fire.

Figure 13: *Xonça* with candles in the centre during a *Novruz* dinner in a private household in Baku (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014)

In order to account for the fascination of materially produced representations of the Azerbaijani nation, as for example commemorations of the *Novruz* holiday demonstrate, I suggest that the interaction with the flames enchant. The bonfires at *Novruz Bayramı* as well as the burning dress of Sabina Babayeva 'enrapture' (Burrell 2011, 148) through their aesthetic appeal and through their destructive power. Flames, as in small-scale encounters with candlelight, torches or bonfires, fascinate. The single flame of a candle, the glowing blaze of dying charcoal briquettes or the dancing flare of a bonfire hypnotise, magnetise gazes on the vibrant and vivid jitter of fire. The soothing warmth of the flames of a bonfire add to feelings of contentment at the same time as the fire's uncontrollability and blazing heat unfold as a threat. I remember how during various *Novruz* celebrations, the sight and the warmth of the bonfires and the burning candles in the middle of a *Xonça* drew bodies in at the same moment as it kept them at a distance. Everybody gazes at the burning centre of the *Xonça* in Figure 13. Yet, people remain reluctant to actually touch the flames.

Thus, fire rituals reproduce their allure and validate their importance through recurring interactions between different bodies and objects engaging (with) flames. That does not mean that the enchanting flame unfolds as an object defined through a binary between the human and nonhuman

world. In the same way as I conceptualise bodies as emergent and momentarily, I perceive of objects as unfolding within interactions, as relevant or less relevant, as hiding for a moment only to move to the fore again in an instance. The object becomes important as a category of analysis, not as ontological category as such, in order to account for the felt experience of encountering fire and flames. By singling out fire and flames or a specific Novruz pastry such as *Paxlava* I echo Hilary Geoghegan and Tara Woodyer (2014, 219) in emphasising 'the central place of materiality in relation to feelings of awe, excitement, and wonder.'

This notion of enchantment connects with my understanding of affective enjoyment as both ideas account for the emergence of a corporeal experience that is inherently ambigous and remains incomplete. Whilst enchantment as 'an open, ready-to-be-surprised "disposition" before, in [and] with the world' (Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013, 196) feels at the same time entrancing and unsettling, affective enjoyment implies the becoming of a state of 'painful pleasure' (Proudfoot 2010, 513). On the one hand, to feel drawn towards flames at the same time as they trigger fear through their alleged destructiveness and unpredictability characterises fire's enchanting quality. Yet, through this ambivalence the enchanting quality of fire remains partial. 'Enchantment exposes how materiality works through distancing as much as a sense of proximity and estrangment alongside attachment' (Ramsay 2009, 212–13).

On the other hand, the enjoyment of national belonging is marked by an impossibility of full enjoyment of materially produced representations of nation in the light of their enticement. The periodic commemoration of a holiday such as *Novruz Bayrami* strengthens a sense of national like-mindedness through valorising the enjoyment of ritualistic practices (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006). Yet, while the preparation of a specific *Novruz* dish or lighting a bonfire on the streets may feel good and binding, these rituals do not transform into a fully satisfying experience of what it means to belong to a community of people who happily share these activities. Instead, the affective enjoyment of national rituals such as celebrating *Novruz Bayrami* always leaves something to be desired. Remember, for example, how, in the vignette about *Novruz Bayrami*, Elnara indulges in her anticipation of the upcoming celebration while at the same time her enthusiasm meets its limits as she realises that she misses the act of cutting *Paxlava*. Her enactment of Novruz rituals remains incomplete and thus impossible making it an even greater object of desire.

Emphasising fire's potential to mesmerise and to enchant people then allows me to specify how its power to unfold on its own terms – and even more effectively if staged accordingly – makes it an efficient intermediary to incite affective enjoyments of materially produced representations of nation. Through the central engagement of fire and flames during the ESC 2012, for example, a

specific political ideology, the joyful reminiscence of encountering pyro effects during *Novruz Bayramı* and the affective becoming of feelings of national belonging intertwine. Through leveraging the affective magnetism of fire, nation-building projects in Azerbaijan can comfortably hide behind people's innocent and apparent natural captivation with flames and in particular behind people's fire rituals during *Novruz* celebration within the supposedly apolitical realm of the family.

## 5.3 Different tastes of *üzərlik*

Enchantments of materially produced representations of nation are not limited to the nation-wide celebration of a holiday or to exceptional spaces such as publicly staged events. They also often characterise banal encounters in everyday life that go by unnoticed.

ÜZƏRLIK

'Oh no', I am thinking, 'not yet another burning waste container!' The stink burns into my nose. The acid tang of burning rubbish, however, smells familiar. Even though smelling burning waste has become an exception during the last two months that I have been here – I think the establishment of a functioning waste disposal infrastructure for the city of Baku is underway – people still set fire to the metallic waste containers that stand around in front of every block on the streets from time to time.

I hate the smell. I literally *hate* it. In a strange way the stench smells offensive. I think it feels like inhaling poison. It reminds me of the winter I have spent living in Ganja a few years back. That time, the air was constantly contaminated with the fume of burned waste. It felt suffocating and very unpleasant.

I hasten to the kitchen in order to close the French window. I want to stop the odour from further penetrating the apartment – this clean, bright and peaceful refuge.

As I have shut the window I turn towards Elnara and Leyla who are busy with feeding and eating, respectively. Leyla is sitting in her high chair. She calmly takes in the laden spoons her mother shuffles into her tiny mouth. Elnara, sitting in front of Leyla, seems relaxed too. She smiles as her daughter takes in another spoonful of mashed baby food without complaining. Does the smell not bother them? It seems even more intense, though, in the kitchen.

'Do you smell the burned waste?' I ask Elnara. She looks bewildered.

'What? No, I don't smell burned waste.'

I am confused. How can she *not* smell this sickening stench? It is everywhere!

'But, isn't there some sort of weird odour in the air?' I try again. I just cannot believe that she doesn't smell anything.

She pauses for a moment.

'I just burned *üzərlik*.' Her expression clears. 'Do you smell it?', she asks, all of a sudden very excited.

'What?!' Now, I am confused.

'Leyla wouldn't eat. She just refused to take anything! She spits out everything I put into her mouth,' she sighs. 'So, I burned some *üzərlik* on the stovetop. We like to use it, because we like the smell. My mum also used it. For example, when we were little and strangers on the street would say, when looking at my sister and myself, how beautiful we are, she would burn *üzərlik* when we got home. She would hold us close to the smell, to the place where she burned the *üzərlik* and then she would fan the fumes all over us. I just did the same with Leyla. I held her close to the stovetop and covered her with the fumes of the burned *üzərlik*. It was interesting, you know. She stopped spitting out her food after that.'

'*Üzərlik*?' I sceptically ask, completely perplexed.

'Yes, *üzərlik*. It's a dried plant, a type of grass, I think. You don't know it? We use it for medical and spiritual purposes.'

'Well, no. I don't know it. It's the first time I hear about it,' I confess. 'What is it? What does it look like?'

She gets up from her chair and begins rummaging through a small box that sits on the kitchen counter. Eventually, she digs out a few withered yellowish brown-green twigs with little capsules at the top.

'Wow! I have never seen this!' I carefully pick one twig and sniff the sere herb. It smells unimpressive. It smells like a small dried green plant would smell. It does not smell like burnt waste at all.

'Do you like the smell of burning rubbish?' I ask Elnara after a while. She throws me a blank look. 'No, I don't like it!'

'You know I thought some people had set fire to a waste container on the street. I smell burning waste. I think for me, burning *üzərlik* resembles the odour of burning waste.' My reasoning irritates Elnara. She grimaces.

While we are talking, Firuza, Elnara's domestic help who is cleaning the apartment today, has entered the kitchen overhearing our conversation.

'*Üzərlik* comes from Mekka,' she begins explaining. 'When you burn it, the smell helps when you have a headache, for instance, or any other pain. It has always been used. *Üzərlik* supports relaxation and it is against the bad eye, because when you burn it, the smell gives you relaxation. Actually, *üzərlik* means eye.'

Elnara interrupts Firuza, 'I don't believe in such things! But, if it works it doesn't matter to me if I believe in the spiritual power of *üzərlik* or not. I will do it, because it works.'

'At my henna party we also had *üzərlik*,' she continues. 'We say "*üzərlik* yandırmaq", to burn *üzərlik*. At the party we burned it in a small pot and distributed the smoke of the burnt *üzərlik* all over the peoples' head's.'

'Why do you do that?' I am curious.

'I don't know. At the henna party we do all the traditions. To make the party more colourful, I guess.'

Carefully thinking about *üzərlik* makes Elnara remember her childhood. 'You know, *üzərlik*, burned *üzərlik,* is the smell of my mum's hands. We just loved it when my mum would run her fingers and palms covered in *üzərlik* smell over our faces.'

She leans back on the kitchen counter, takes her opened hands and runs the palms over her face. She stands very still, with her eyes closed, inhaling deeply and soundly relaxed. She takes her hands back from her face, opens her eyes, looks at me, smiling (field notes from 22 March 2014, Baku).

Figure 14: *Üzərlik* (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014)

The vignette details a moment of affective encounter that irritates Elnara and me through experiencing a specific smell in very different ways. Sitting somewhere in Elnara's and Ilgar's apartment I smell burning waste. As I very much dislike this smell – I identify it as a 'stench' and feel threatened by it – I try to impede its intensification by shutting the French window in the kitchen. Still occupied with my experience of disgust the first moment of irritation unfolds when I see Elnara and Leyla eating in the kitchen, seemingly unimpressed by the odour. While the smell disturbs me, it does not seem to bother Leyla and Elnara. They do not react to the smell in a way that I understand. They seem composed and 'relaxed'. Elnara's assertion that she does not smell burning waste intensifies my irritation. The second moment of irritation emerges when Elnara states that for her the smell of burning *üzərlik* differs from the odour of burning waste. For me, on the contrary, burning *üzərlik* smells exactly like burning waste. In fact, I am confident that I smell burnt waste. My confusion eventually culminates when Elnara demonstrates through caressing her face and smelling her palms how she not only likes the smell of burning *üzərlik,* but loves and deeply enjoys it.

How is it possible that Elnara's experience of smelling burnt *üzərlik* differs profoundly from mine? How can Elnara indulge in a smell that fills me with disgust? How do our diverging inclinations towards the smell of burnt *üzərlik* attach our bodily sensations to as well as detach them from feelings of belonging to and alienation from a national community of Azerbaijanis? Let me begin by scrutinising my initial repulsion of what I smell. The smell is not naturally disgusting. Rather, the smell becomes disgusting for me through my bodily encounter of experiencing it. The encounter with the smell activates past experiences of having lived in Ganja, or, to put it differently, of experiencing Azerbaijani national spaces. The smell also triggers bodily histories of growing up in a social environment lacking the visceral proximity to the smell of burning waste in metal containers. I hate the smell because I encounter it outside the expected and valorised normality of my growing-up in Germany – outside a national space that feels familiar and valuable to me. With Ahmed (2001, 348), 'hate is not contained within the contours of an [object], but moves across or between subjects, objects, signs and others, which themselves are not locatable or found within the present.' In other words, my repulsion of the smell 'become[s] attached' (Ahmed 2001, 363) to the experience of this smell. While I refer to the smell as a kind of emergent object inciting the experience of national spaces, I perceive of it as a relational and processual materiality exceeding physical concretion. Following Ben Anderson and John Wylie (2009, 327), who apprehend 'materiality in terms of levels,' the smell as 'matter [is] interrogative, [...] questioning or promising, [...] that with which or according to which we perceive' (ibid, 328).

To understand my aversion of the smell in view of Elnara's propensity I wonder what my hate of the smell does. I suggest that, on the one hand, it establishes my sense of self as a Western person in a not-quite-Western environment in the moment of experiencing the smell. Through the moment of affective encounter the dirty and 'contaminating' smell develops in contrast to a supposedly clean and purified non-smell of my Western home. Elnara's and Ilgar's apartment becomes a clean and familiar space as its modern fitted kitchen, the decorative fireplace and the stylish wicker furniture on the balcony produce a Western-style ambiance. Encountering the odour of what I sense as burnt waste in this setting, irritates, as it does not fit the place. The smell endangers the apartment's purity and as a consequence my sense of being at home and of feeling comfortable. My running towards the kitchen window to shut it in order to prevent the stench to further 'penetrate the apartment' is a sign of how far I have become intimate with the place. To 'inhabit spaces, coming to embody them [...] is a process of becoming intimate with where one is: an intimacy that feels like inhabiting a secret room that is concealed from the view of others' (Ahmed 2006, 11). Yet, my experience of the flat as a Western, homelike space remains partial. I am at once reminded that I am in Baku, Azerbaijan – a non-Western space – as I look out of the window, move beyond the flat's door or, in fact, smell burnt waste or *üzərlik*. Living with Elnara, Ilgar and Leyla in that apartment in a central district of Baku turns into a not-quite-Western experience by partially comforting me through producing experiences of feeling at home and partially depressing me through generating experiences of estrangement.

On the other hand, hating the smell produces a national space of experiencing Azerbaijan. In the same way as 'particular histories of attachment are re-opened in each encounter, such that some bodies are already encountered as more hateful than other bodies' (Ahmed 2001, 357), affective encounters activate positive or negative assessments of objects and places. The smell reminds me of my time in Ganja when I had to accept living conditions which limited my personal comfort such as a high particulate matter emission, in particular from burning firewood and waste. The encounter with the smell activates the anticipation that being in Azerbaijan implies the likelihood of viscerally experiencing burnt waste. For Elnara, on the contrary, the encounter with the smell of burnt *üzərlik* sparks delight through invoking childhood memories. The smell encourages Firuza to share her knowledge about *üzərlik's* healing properties. A national space of experiencing Azerbaijan thus becomes through this moment of affective encounter between different bodies and objects such as a specific particulate matter composite in the air, my bodily histories of having lived in Azerbaijan, Elnara's memories of her mom's hands covered in the smell of *üzərlik*, the usually smoke-free apartment and my place-based feelings of comfort and discomfort. Both my

hatred of the smell and Elnara's enjoyment 'involve the spatial re-organisation of bodies' (Ahmed 2001, 365) in producing a nationalised space.

Ahmed (2006) suggests that a specific way of inhabiting national spaces makes people feel closer to or more distant from each other, from different objects such as a smell, a picture, a sound or the touch of a texture, from diverse practices and towards places. 'Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward' (Ahmed 2006, 3). What then makes me hate the smell of burnt *üzərlik* while Elnara loves it? How does a shared appreciation of *üzərlik* align Elnara and Firuza while separating myself?

First, Elnara and I do not share the same 'direction toward an object' (Ahmed 2006, 117), that is, toward the smell in the kitchen that unfolds as a momentary experience and toward the withered twigs of *üzərlik*. Roughly speaking, as the experience of contentedness or discontentedness in bodily encounters creates close and distant objects, my sensory capacities to detect the smell of burnt *üzərlik* connect with discontentedness while Elnara's sensory capacities to smell burnt *üzərlik* connect with contentedness. Whereas the smell of burnt *üzərlik* materialises as pleasing contact with Elnara, it develops as unpleasant exposure with me. *Üzərlik* emerges in proximate places in Elnara's worlds of experience, but in distant places in mine. Yet, the proximate or distant experiences of loveable and hateable objects are not preassigned. Whether we like or dislike the experience of an object depends on the specific situation – implying the temporalities, materialities, spatialities and processualities – of a bodily encounter and on the affective stimulations of past experiences and may change through and within every new encounter. In fact, 'an object can be affective by virtue of its own location [...] and the timing of its appearance' (Ahmed 2010, 25).

Second, Elnara and Firuza share an affirmative orientation toward *üzərlik*. They share a specific incorporated knowledge of and about *üzərlik* that I do not share. This knowledge that Elnara and Firuza share matters as a knowledge of non-surprise. The situational configuration of different bodies and objects involved in the moment the smell of burnt *üzərlik* unfolds in this apartment in Baku does surprise me. I do not like it. But, most importantly, I do not expect it. For Elnara and Firuza, however, the emerging smell feels expected. Burning *üzərlik* or simply "'doing things" depend [...] on the ways in which the world is available as a space for action, a space where things "have a certain place"' (Ahmed 2006, 109). Regarding the knowledge of and about *üzərlik*, it is thus less important how the plant is exactly defined and what its proven medical benefits are. Interestingly, although sharing a felt proximity toward *üzərlik*, Elnara and Firuza disagree on its

spiritual power. Their dispute about the origins of *üzərlik's* curing capacities, however, shows that they share an awareness of *üzərlik's* existence and knowledge about its utilisation. With Ahmed (2006, 117), 'a "we" emerges as an effect of a shared direction toward an object.' The anticipation that a lot of people in Azerbaijan share an orientation toward *üzərlik* produces a sense of a felt collectivity.

Indeed, this collective awareness emerges as much through aligning nationally as through unifying culturally. The transnational and cultural practice of utilising *üzərlik* for medical and spiritual purposes revives an affective nationalism, I argue, in the moment that burning *üzərlik* intertwines with the production of national spaces as the example in the vignette reveals. Bodies which 'invest in the same objects' (Ahmed 2010, 38) substantiate the felt community of a nation. National objects thus become through affective investments in objects producing a sense of collective alignment. Elnara's positive reminiscence of her mother's hands covered in the smell of *üzərlik* demonstrates that the 'objects we encounter are not neutral: they enter our near sphere with an affective value already in place, which means they are already invested with positive and negative value' (Ahmed 2010, 34). Liking or disliking the smell of *üzərlik*, the taste of a specific dish or the sight of a national flag then result from varying distances and proximities toward and from different affective investments in these objects.

To summarise, *üzərlik* is not a national smell constituting a nation of Azerbaijanis who align through enjoying the smell. Rather, the encounter with the smell activates bodily histories and incites positive or negative perceptions of what unfolds as smell. I recognise the smell as burnt waste. Elnara smells the same composition of particulate matter in the air as burnt *üzərlik*. The encounter between the smell, the Western-style apartment, the activation of past memories, Elnara, Leyla calmly eating and Firuza's explanations of *üzərlik's* spiritual power generate the experience of the Azerbaijani nation. Elnara, Firuza and Leyla constitute this national community through merging into a community of sharing the knowledge about *üzərlik* and the enjoyment of its utilisation. I also constitute this Azerbaijani community of experiencing *üzərlik* as I feel excluded. My knowledge of the smell and of *üzərlik* feels different from theirs and most importantly distant to my sense of corporeal enjoyment.

## 5.4 Conclusion: from (dis)liking to (not) sharing

Thinking about the ways in which materially produced representations of nation enchant and draw people in marks a core question in understanding why there is something we experience as nationalism at all. If the encounter with national bodies, objects, practices and places results in visceral experiences of happiness and love or of unhappiness and hate, it is less surprising that people develop positive and negative attachments to various materially produced representations of nations such as national colours, music, food or dances and align with people who share the same set of positive bonds.

During the commemoration of the national holiday *Novruz Bayram*, in particular the repetitive enactments of very specific practices and rituals and the alleged national distinctiveness of celebrating make people enjoy the holiday. To follow an unspoken set of practices and most importantly to enjoy the performance of *Novruz* rituals confirms a body's national normality and thus engenders corporeal feelings of national belonging. In fact, enjoying and celebrating *Novruz Bayram* unfolds as an important national feeling. The holiday's central fire theme makes it an effective tool to win people for political means. People's fascination with fire is employed to conceal the utilisation of the holiday's core symbol for political means.

Experiences of liking as well as disliking boost affective investments in bodies, objects, practices and places. Enjoying the smell of burnt *üzərlik* aligns Elnara with Firuza as they share a specific knowledge about and proximity toward *üzərlik*. At the same time my absent knowledge about the plant and the disgust that characterise my encounter with it leave me outside their space of shared delight. The moment of affective encounter producing the smell of burnt *üzərlik* or of burnt waste, respectively, gives rise to the experience of a national community in the moment the encounter with the smell activates bodily histories that connect a specific visceral experience to a specific place materialising as Azerbaijan.

Eventually, the power of positive or negative attachments towards materially produced representations of nations – making affective nationalism unresistable – lie in their inherent ambivalence and variability. The celebration of the *Novruz* holiday does not only feel positive for Elnara. Rather, her enjoyment of enacting *Novruz* rituals leaves her torn between the unconditional love for her child and the pleasure she takes in commemorating the holiday. The utilisation of fire in mesmerising people to enjoy Azerbaijani national heritage feels appealing and threatening at the same time. On a different account, the pleasant or unpleasant experience of smelling burnt *üzərlik* depends on the activation of bodily histories, on the situatedness of an affective encounter. Every

new encounter allows for a different experience of burnt *üzərlik* and thus to include or exclude people from a felt collectivity of sharing a specific orientation toward an object.

Feelings of national belonging emerge in moments bodies align through sharing a certain orientation toward and in particular a visceral enjoyment of an object such as the national flag that is being reproduced as an object of love and respect. While this chapter addressed the ways in which bodies, objects, practices and places become pleasant or unpleasant and objects of love or of hate, the following chapter focuses on the affective mechanisms and their implications of sharing or not sharing a specific orientation toward materially produced representations of nation.

# 6 Experiencing collective emotion

*The Republic of Azerbeidshan has only a few more days to live. Enough. I will sleep till the trumpet calls me to the river again, where my ancestor Ibrahim Khan Shirvanshir laid down his life for the freedom of his people.*

*— Kurban Said, Ali and Nino (2000, 237)*


Figure 15: Chingiz Mustafayev (1960-1992) (Heydarov and Bagiyev 2008, 45)

On the picture above (Figure 15) you see the war correspondent Chingiz Mustafayev while reporting from the conflict scenes in the Karabakh region during the violent outbreaks between people of Armenian and Azerbaijani descent in the early 1990s. The caption reads as follows:

> Chingiz Mustafayev (1960 - 1992)
>
> He was one of the most famous journalists from Azerbaijan, despite the fact that he worked as a journalist for less than a year. He was not educated as a journalist but created

> a video anthology of the Karabakh war and documented an invaluable amount of atrocities that were committed during this war. He was also, unfortunately, killed in this same war. He was killed on 15 June 1992 during the Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He has been awarded the order of National Hero of Azerbaijan.

The picture and the caption are imprinted in the Russian version of the book called 'Azerbaijan: 100 Questions and Answers' that is accessible worldwide online and in print in book shops in Azerbaijan also in German, French and Arabic translations.

Mustafayev was a young man from Azerbaijan, who worked, among other things, as a video journalist for the Democratic Russia Press Agency between 1991 and 1992 (Mustafayev 1999). According to a report from his brother Vahid Mustafayev (ibid.), Chingiz died of injuries caused by a grenade explosion while collecting footage during battles between Armenian and Azerbaijani armed forces in the Karabakh region in 1992. But why did he become a national hero of Azerbaijan? What is the connection between him, the 'atrocities' he documented in Karabakh and his posthumous designation as a national hero? How does the encounter with his picture or the memory of his work take shape as affective nationalism in Azerbaijan?

The past two chapters addressed the ways in which affective nationalism produces subjects of national corporeality and of national meaning and how the encounters between different bodies and objects affect the development of national attachment and detachment in everyday life. The present chapter focuses on the third dimension of affective nationalism, namely on the ways in which nationalism becomes a felt experience of community as a result of affective encounters. While the first part of the chapter discusses the emergence of a national Azerbaijani community through the collective experience of pain, the second part of the chapter looks at the ways in which the experience of collective pain might as well turn into an experience of collective pride and thus empower shared feelings of national strength.

## 6.1 United through pain and distress in remembering Khojaly

Mustafayev is one of several Azerbaijani citizens who became national heroes for their civil engagement in the Karabakh war. Arguably, Mustafayev received the award as a national hero because he reported from the front line during the Karabakh war and, most importantly, collected footage and thus visual evidence of the dead bodies from the homicides in the village of Khojaly (*Xocalı*) in February 1992 (Mammadov 1999).

Khojaly, a town of about 6300 inhabitants in 1991, is, a majority ethnic Azerbaijani settlement in the Nagorny-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (Bolukbasi 2011). The town lies about 270 kilometres west of Baku (see Figure 3). Over the past 25 years, *Khojaly* has grown into a central marker of public national knowledge in Azerbaijan signifying 'not only a psychic trauma for those who were the participants or victims of force but a trauma for the entire population, including even those who were not subjected to violence or immediate witnesses of such acts' (Garagozov 2010, 4). What do people recall had happened? How has Khojaly become a collective national experience that also justifies Mustafayev's nomination as national hero of Azerbaijan?

Thomas De Waal (2003, 170–71) pictures the events of Khojaly as follows:

> The Armenian assault began on the night of 25-26 February [...]. Armored vehicles from the Soviet 366th Regiment lent their support. They surrounded Khojali on three sides before Armenian fighters went in and overwhelmed local defenders.
>
> Only one exit out of Khojali was open [...]. In the middle of the night a large crowd fled through the woods, which were ankle-deep in snow, and started to descend to the valley of the small Gargar river. In early morning the crowd of Khojali civilians, interspersed with a few militiamen, emerged onto open ground near the Armenian village of Nakhichevanik. They were hit by a wall of gunfire from Armenian fighters on the hillside above. The militiamen returned fire, but were heavily outnumbered and killed. More fleeing civilians kept on coming onto a scene of appalling carnage. [...] Torn bodies littered the snowy ground. [...] Dozens of victims died of cold and frostbite in the woods. More than a thousand Khojali residents were taken prisoners [...].
>
> There are varying estimates of how many Azerbaijanis were killed in or near Khojali. Probably the most reliable figure is that of the official Azerbaijani parliamentary investigation, which put the death toll at 485.

According to De Waal (2003, 172), 'Khojali [is] the worst massacre of the Karabakh war' – and he is not alone with this opinion. The majority of my informants and Azerbaijani and non-Azerbaijani scholars alike reproduce the Khojaly events as a 'tragedy' (Garagozov 2010, 4; Bolukbasi 2011, 183), emphasising that it has been 'the worst tragedy of the war' (Imranli-Lowe 2015, 11) and identifying it as 'the sole instance of a premeditated massacre of this scale recorded during the conflict over Karabakh' (Cornell 2011, 62).

Establishing Khojaly as a singular event through defining its specific time and place, makes it a graspable experience. Rather than becoming an elusive knowledge of violence and national loss, public narratives and commemoration practices make Khojaly a tangible experience of the historical present. Each year, on 26 February, for example, people in Baku visit the *Xocalı Prospekti*

[Khojaly avenue] close to the *Xətai* metro station in an area about two kilometres east of the city centre of Baku. On that day, billboards and oversized canvas hanging from the buildings next to the street line the avenue and accompany the visitor on her route to the Khojaly monument at its centre. The billboards and oversize canvas are coloured in red and black. In big red letters, splattered with white one billboard for example says 'Justice for Khojaly!' The biggest canvas, hanging from a multistorey building, shows a picture of the Khojaly monument – a woman carrying a dead child – that says 'Our blood memory! Forgotten, made forgotten!' (see Figure 16).

Another black coloured billboard with white letters and a red coloured left corner says '1992, 26 February, Let's not forget Khojaly!' Black coloured letters that fade into red accentuate the word Khojaly. Black and white photographs at eye level positioned next to the people walking towards the Khojaly monument at the centre of the avenue show faces contorted with pain, faces belonging to dead corpses, screaming children and visceral organs strung together on torn up flesh. Individual visitors as well as groups of people and school classes pass the images and the oversized canvas. Once the people reach the monument, they pause for a moment facing the statue with the women carrying the dead body (Figure 17). Some lay down single red carnations or floral wreaths at the platform of the statue before heading back. High-build speakers airing *Muğam* music add to an atmosphere of sadness and staged mourning.

Encountering the images, the monument and the illustrations hanging from the buildings and on the billboards, irritates. As they attract the visitor's attention through their sheer size, lurid colours and literal interjections, they, at the same time, evoke an instant desire to look away in order to make the smothering presence of the intensity of what they picture and claim bearable. Yet, as the biggest canvas (Figure 16) screams 'Forgotten!' the visitor feels trapped in an ethical dilemma: How could she dare to avoid the painful encounter with the visual evidence of the Khojaly events when the unawareness of Khojaly seems exactly what makes the circumstances of commemorating Khojaly so painful and inevitable?


Figure 16: Khojaly canvas hanging from a multistorey building next to the Khojaly Avenue in Baku on 26 February 2014. The picture shows an image of the Khojaly monument. The text says: 'Khojaly 1992-2014, 22 years; Our blood memory! Forgotten, made forgotten! The text on the blue-coloured frame is a quote from Heydar Aliyev: 'The tragedy of Khojaly is the bloody page of the ethnic cleansing and massacre conducted against our nation by the nationalist Armenians for more than two hundred years' (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).


Figure 17: Khojaly monument 'Mother's Cry' showing a woman carrying a dead child, erected in the centre of the Khojaly avenue in Baku, photographed on 26 February 2014 (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

While the billboards and the canvas demand to not forget Khojaly, the annual commemoration practices on 26 February deliberately forget. They forget, for example, another bloody event in the conflictual history of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations that happened four years before Khojaly. On 26 February 1988, 'uncontrolled Azerbaijani mobs went on a rampage, looting and seeking out and killing ethnic Armenians. Estimates of the number of dead range from the official figure of 32 to the several hundred cited by Armenian sources', reports Svante Cornell (2011, 49). The so-called 'Sumgait Massacre' (Bolukbasi 2011, 87) is not the only incident of ethno-nationally motivated violence against Armenians in the course of the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict. Yet, as much as Khojaly marks a tragic, if not for most Azerbaijani people the *most* tragic incident during the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the killings in *Sumqait* are also considered 'a turning point' (Cornell 2011, 49) and mark 'a symbol of ethnically motivated violence' (De Waal 2003, 44) during the conflict. In Azerbaijan, however, the confession that Azerbaijani people committed ethno-nationally motivated crimes remains absent from people's stories and official reporting. Quite the contrary, victimising the collective body of the nation seems to work much better to emotionally involve the masses for the sake of the nation. Let me expand on this aspect in more detail.

The fact that the statue of the woman carrying the child is called 'Mother's Cry' (Figure 17) engenders Khojaly as a national concern. Many authors reproduce the tragic extent of the Khojaly events through emphasising that in particular unarmed civilians such as children, older people and women lost their lives (Burton 2005; Hirose and Jasutis 2014; Isgandarova 2013). For Nazila Isgandarova (2013, 176), a scholar of pastoral counselling, the physical violence in Khojaly targeted especially women as they are 'the carriers, quite literally, of the next generation of the nation: women constitute the biological core of nationality and they carry the task of passing on the cultural and spiritual values of nationhood to their children.' Through confirming the popular idea that 'women often come to symbolize the national collectivity' (Yuval-Davis 1993, 627), Isgandarova equates the assault of Armenian armed forces on the settlement of Khojaly with an assault on the body of the nation, on the motherland Azerbaijan. The Khojaly monument on Figure 15 thus does not symbolise any woman carrying any child that lost its life in February 1992. Rather, the woman personifies the Azerbaijani nation that has remained wounded ever since. She is not necessarily wounded on her skin organ that would limit her performance in a way discernible to everybody and everything even without knowledge of what had happened. Rather, the wounds unfold inherent to her condition, imperceptible to an outsider who does not share a memory of February 1992 in Khojaly. Her wounds emerge more like a broken heart. They are difficult to spot unless she makes them explicit. The dead child lying in the arms of the Azerbaijani mother nation

represents the people who died on 26 February in Khojaly. Through designating the woman as a mother, the child becomes her child and thus the dead people it represents become the people of the Azerbaijani nation.

As a result, contemporary experiences of the memory of the Khojaly events emerge through the embodiment of anger and pain. My informant Nisa, for example, once told me during a stroll through one of Baku's shopping malls a few days before the Khojaly commemoration day on 26 February 2014, how she feels about Khojaly and what she knows had happened there. While we had talked about some of her family business before, I took the opportunity to pose some questions about Khojaly after a break of silence. While she is talking I realise how she gets excited. Her voice becomes louder and a bit trembling. She is almost screaming when she says:

> This is the tragedy of the century. I mean what they have done there, it's-- Only beasts can have done this, in Khojaly. What they have done there, I mean, it's only like-- I don't know! It's not normal! I mean, you can kill; ok, but raping pregnant women and making them deliver their baby right there and then making a woman eat their own child and so forth?! You know what I mean? Every time I think about it and when I talk about it, I want to cry. It's just too emotional for me.

Nisa not only shares with me the pictures occupying her mind when she thinks about Khojaly: she sees people killing other people, men raping women and forcing them to give birth. Rather, by describing the attacker as 'beasts' and illustrating in detail what they have done to women in Khojaly, she conveys the intensity of her shock to me. She is shocked and in visceral despair as the memories of the event and the pictures in her mind travel through her body, making her speak up and want to cry. The ways in which Nisa articulates herself, such as that she communicates the intensity of her anger and her pain through repeating her words, shows the 'connection between the over-representation of pain and its unrepresentability' (Ahmed 2004c, 22). She interrupts her sentences, exclaims 'I don't know!' and reassures herself whether I understood her correctly in order to express the severity of what happened in Khojaly and how painful this feels to her. Yet, her words fail her, they cannot capture what she really feels. She is left with her bodily experiences of feeling and expressing the pain through speaking louder and through almost starting to cry.

The visceral knowledge about the Khojaly events transforms remembering bodies, such as Nisa's, into national bodies. Nisa's memories of Khojaly become painful through the momentary encounters between the pictures in her mind, the images of the people who died on 26 February 1992 in Khojaly and myself as addressee of her outrage. She feels invested in the events in February 1992 in Khojaly as the public illustration of Khojaly – such as the Khojaly monument I have

introduced above – transforms the dead bodies of the event into national Azerbaijani bodies making her, Nisa, holder of Azerbaijani citizenship and born on Azerbaijani national territory, a member of the Azerbaijani nation who could have been equally attacked, raped and killed. The pain Nisa feels is not an individual suffering from personal loss. She has neither personal nor family ties to the victims of the Khojaly events or to their relatives. Rather, the pain Nisa feels is – freely adapted from Ahmed (2004c, 34) – 'the bodily life of [Azerbaijani national] history.' Anguished about the torture and the loss of Azerbaijani citizens and, in fact, the loss about national territories throughout the Karabakh war, Khojaly becomes the wound of the Azerbaijani nation that has not yet healed. 'The wound functions as a trace of where the surface of another entity [the attackers] has impressed upon the body [the body of the Azerbaijani nation], an impression that is felt and seen as the violence of negation' (Ahmed 2004c, 27).

The persistence of this national wound, that guarantees continuous pain and thus corporeal investments, binds different bodies together that become equally affected through the situatedness of their bodily histories. Khojaly becomes a collective national experience through pain, or rather, through sharing the intensity of pain. The pain, emerging as an experience of loss, restlessness and partial destruction affects the encounter between different bodies, memories and places. Indeed, 'the affectivity of pain is crucial to the forming of the [national] body as both a material and lived entity' (Ahmed 2004c, 24). The national body becomes through people's emotional responses to the memories and the pictures of Khojaly.

It is an 'affective feeling of normativity' (Berlant 2011, 45) of remembering Khojaly that arranges different bodies, expectations and experiences into a felt community of sharing and belonging. Through this 'affective feeling of normativity' memories and inherited ways of reacting and acting connect with feelings and responses to the ways in which bodies continuously experience the world. Navigating within these 'affect worlds' (ibid., 226) requires affective capacities to balance between different expectations and accepted and unaccepted behaviours in order to remain feeling included. The constant repetition of remembering the Khojaly events in specific ways, such as visiting the Khojaly monument each year with the school, including a Khojaly remembrance wall in every public museum of the country or informing foreign communities about Khojaly cultivates bodies' affective capacities to feel invested in the memories. In fact, to maintain the persistence of the national wound and thus the intensity of the pain that binds different bodies together requires bodies' continuous emotionality. The personal body becomes in charge of mourning, of crying and of feeling heartbroken about the Khojaly events in order to preserve national sanity and thus the conditions of belonging to an Azerbaijani national community. Remembering Khojaly thus marks

'a process of collapsing the political and the personal into a world of public intimacy' (Berlant 1997, 1). A public intimacy of, for example, witnessing a mother's grief for her dying child, cast in bronze so as to become eternal.

Scholars and my informants alike do not question and, instead, often reproduce the ways in which public propaganda about Khojaly utilises and nourishes the felt viscerality of the event. It is not just Nisa who gives a detailed account of what she knows, or at least thinks she knows, had happened to the bodies in Khojaly. A popular information book about Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan: 100 questions and answers) illustrates its narrative of Khojaly with the help of images from the battlefield (Figure 18): on the left, a soldier expressing his consternation about the mutilated bodies of an entire family that has been killed; on the right, the frantic gaze of a man holding the fleshly remnants of the dead body of his mother. Through placing both dead and living bodies in these pictures, the cruelty and suffering of the Khojaly events become all the more visible.


Figure 18: Khojaly illustrations in the Russian version of the book Azerbaijan: 100 questions and answers (Heydarov and Bagiyev 2008, 18)

Isgandarova (2013, 179–80) shares an equally fleshy portrait of the attacked bodies in a publication written in a very personal tone that suggests her emotional and moral involvement in the Khojaly events. She writes:

> They also tortured and killed children before their parent's eyes and put out the eyes of two Azerbaijanis in the national army uniform with screwdrivers. [...] In a corner lay the corpse of a woman. It was visible that she was pregnant, and her stomach had been cut and scratched. Armenians [attached] a live cat to her stomach, and while she was alive, Armenians stood and laughed.

By focusing on the corporeal cruelty of the events, narrative accounts of Khojaly aim at effecting immediate sensations of bodily repulsion. Through the encounter with the words shaped into texts, and the activation of bodily histories and past experiences the descriptions affect the reader. Visualising how eyes are being removed with a screwdriver or how a pregnant women's belly is being split make her stomach contract and her throat form a lump. She feels sick, at least momentarily, as long as she stands the reification of what the words do and before turning away from the almost unbearable contact with the texts. Yet, Khojaly does not become an experience of national collectivity until the moment the encounter with the narratives and images transform the compassionate feeling of shock and unease into the pain of personal, and as such national, agony.

The affectivity of pain constantly activated through practices of remembering Khojaly becomes a central tool in Azerbaijani nation-building. The very illustration of Khojaly as a collective trauma (Garagozov 2010) and a tragedy, for example, implies an ongoing deficiency and a disorder constituting the sense of the Azerbaijani nation. The Oxford Online Dictionary ('Tragedy' 2016) defines tragedy as 'an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.' To mark Khojaly as a tragedy then means to recognise its negative impact on what constitutes a contemporary sense of Azerbaijanihood. What is more, designating Khojaly as a tragedy legitimises a victimisation of the body of the Azerbaijani nation. As the territorial conflict in the Karabakh region is an ongoing domestic and foreign affair, the commemoration of Khojaly symbolises the severity of the pain about the loss of nationalised territories.

Furthermore, according to public belief and to all of my respondents with whom I talked about Khojaly, the perpetrators responsible for the Khojaly events have not been brought to justice yet. Some describe this fact as the worst part of their agony. Konul (conversation on 27 February 2014), one of my Baku-based informants, for example, complains that the world community has not yet registered the Khojaly events as genocide. She demands international recognition of what happened in February 1992 and seems upset while telling me: 'Khojaly was like the Rwandan genocide. But the world doesn't know about it!' For Nisa (conversation on 23 February 2014), the current and past governments of the Republic of Azerbaijan that failed to call the attackers of the Khojaly events to account are to blame:

> We know exactly which commander, which troop was responsible. But why are people not being punished? Why are they not prosecuted? Why? If we [Azerbaijan] are so powerful, why are we not--? [...] Our people, our generals, our judges, our, whoever they are, there on the top, they should do something about it. But they haven't done anything and that's why I am mad at my government.

It is for this felt condition of impunity and thus incompleteness of the Khojaly events that the legacy of Mustafayev becomes important for people. The felt lack of knowledge and publicity about the events justify Mustafayev's heroism, as he was the first to produce and to release media material that focused on the dead bodies, on the victims of violence. He produced faces, numbers and, in fact, tangible bodies and personal stories of loss, pain and despair. He produced an Azerbaijani national community consisting of actual people, of women, men and children of flesh and blood. In contrast to international news coverage that mainly represented the Azerbaijani community as attacking defenceless Armenians (Imranli-Lowe 2015), Mustafayev portrayed Azerbaijanis as the victims of Armenian aggression and a community of innocent civilians. The journalist Thomas Goltz (1998, 135) goes so far as to claim that Mustafayev's ten-minute film based on the footage he collected a day after the Khojaly events that was shown in the Azerbaijani parliament at the beginning of March 1992 'changed the history of the country.'

It thus does not come as a surprise that everybody in Azerbaijan knows about Chingiz Mustafayev and honours his legacy. Even while commemorating the victims of 20 January 1990, the first so-called 'collective trauma of Azerbaijanis' (Garagozov 2010, 4) that I will turn to in the second part of this chapter, people meet at his grave in order to lay down red carnations and to pray (Figure 19). Awarding Mustafayev the honour of a national hero of Azerbaijan unfolds within a general strategy of compensating the territorial and bodily losses the Karabakh conflict has caused until today through producing national pride and strength. At the same time, Mustafayev's legacy helps to engender the Khojaly events as lived experiences over and over again. He, like no one else, personifies the fantasy of the Azerbaijani national body as an upright, honest and moral citizen who acts in the sole interest of the national community and would give his life for the sake of the nation.


Figure 19: Grave of Chingiz Mustafayev next to the Alley of Martyrs in Baku, covered in red carnations on 20 January 2014 (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

## 6.2 United through grief and pride in commemorating martyrs on 20 January

The commemoration of the events of 20 January 1990 holds an even larger share in Azerbaijani nation-building, at least when judging from the official attention the event receives. In contrast to the Khojaly remembrance, 20 January is an official day of mourning. Also, its monument in Baku, the Alley of Martyrs, is situated at one of the most prominent places within the city centre rather than on the outskirts of the city. While both days mark the commemoration of dead bodies that emerge as bodies of the Azerbaijani nation and indicate a 'collective trauma of Azerbaijanis' (Garagozov 2010, 4), the emotional affectivity they employ functions differently. Each of the two events stimulates the affective emergence of a national community of Azerbaijanis. Whereas the

affectivity of pain and loss govern the commemoration practices of Khojaly, the affectivity of grief and pride characterise the remembrance of 20 January.

What had happened on 20 January 1990 in Baku that justifies its designation as national trauma and makes it *the* national mourning day in Azerbaijan? Following an increasing mobilisation among Azerbaijanis to rally for the national and territorial integrity of the country in the late 1980s, the Soviet government sent tanks into Baku on the night from 19 to 20 January 1990 in an attempt to maintain political control. 168 civilians were killed and a few hundred injured as the troops proceeded to obtain control over the city (Sayfutdinova 2014). Judging from the gravestones at the cemetery displaying the pictures of the dead set in polished granite, most of the victims were young to middle-aged men. Azerbaijan scholars consider this so-called 'Black January' (Sultanova 2014, 16) a 'turning point in the political history of Azerbaijan' (Tokluoglu 2012, 323). Rauf Garagozov (2010, 4) argues that the event has ingrained itself in the memory of the people and has become a 'trauma for the entire population.'

Even though all of my informants reassured me of the great importance of the Khojaly remembrance, the event, in a bizarre way, ranks second after 20 January. Everybody I spoke with identified 'Black January' as the most important national mourning day for Azerbaijanis. Some respondents, however, also mentioned the day's importance in the celebration of Azerbaijan's independence. People's identification of 20 January as a day of national independence corresponds to the idea that the intention of the military intervention of Soviet troops on 20 January was designed to smother nationalist fervour. This nationalist fervour played a prominent role in justifying ethnic cleansing and violent retaliation during the conflict between the Azerbaijan SSR (Socialist Soviet Republic) and the Armenian SSR over the political annexation of the Nagorny-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast in the late 1980s (De Waal 2003; Sayfutdinova 2014).

The annual national mourning day of 20 January is a ritualised public event in a banal way: people just know when to go, where to go, why to go and what to do. In the last ten years several *Şəhidlər Xiyabanı* (martyrs' alleys) have been built across larger cities of Azerbaijan. These alleys are often a mixture between a (symbolic) graveyard and a monument. Through visiting a martyr's alley in order to remember the events of 20 January, the memorial services become place-based. Similar to the commemoration practices on 26 February, on 20 January each year, masses of people in smaller or larger groups of friends, colleagues, families or school classes go on a pilgrimage to the alleys. Throughout the day, the groups meet at places around the monument to then collectively walk to

the alley. They carry red carnations to drop them on the (symbolic) graves when passing by. The major roads around the place are closed and police regulates the passing of the masses.

On 20 January 2014, I accompanied a youth group on their procession to the martyrs' alley in Baku. This group, consisting mainly of university-educated men between the age of 20 to 35, is one of the few known activist groups in Azerbaijan. Members describe themselves as interested in the democratisation of the country. With the help of my family connections, I contacted one of the activists who then invited me to join the group for the walk along the martyrs' alley. At that day only one other female member of the group joined the collective march and I happened to walk next to her.

LIKE THE MUSIC IS CRYING

I am walking next to Samira. She joined our group some minutes ago, greeting everybody with effusion and pecking them on their cheeks. I don't know her, but she is so outgoing and I instantaneously take her into my heart. She hands me a red carnation and asks me to drop it on one of the graves on the martyrs' alley. We are moving in silence towards the alley. The street is closed to traffic and it feels almost intimidating to walk on this wide, four-lane road. All the people are marching in the same direction, with the same intention, the same pace, the same purpose.

As we start walking, it is just the echo of our steps and the murmur of voices that hang in the cold air. But as we are heading for the monument, we hear a slow-moving, whining music: a high-pitched wind instrument combines trills and disharmonic sound sequences. High-build speakers carry the sound along the alley and the neighbouring cemetery.

I bend over to Samira. I don't want to drown the music and ask her in a soft voice:

"What kind of music is this? Why do they play it?"

"This is *Muğam*. They are playing it for the sadness."

She frowns and then hesitates as if looking for the right words to describe what she is feeling.

"They play this music so that people can feel the sadness."

She pauses.

"You know, we lost many people 24 years ago. It is part of our culture that they play this music. It is our national music and today is a day of sadness. The music is like it is giving you sadness. You listen to it and then you feel sad about what happened."

I think about what she just said and wonder about the sadness of the moment. Do I feel sad?

I feel compassion.

"Are you feeling sad?", I ask.

"Me? Because I am Azerbaijani by blood, you know, I am feeling it in my blood. The music is in my blood. As soon as I hear the music, it is in my heart and my heart is broken. Yes. I lost many people here, children, youth, adults… It is like the music is crying."

She pauses as if following the stream of music running through her veins right into her heart exhausts her talking.

We keep on walking.

All of a sudden, about two-dozen men exclaim in unison "Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!" somewhere behind us. I turn around.

The resolute calls irritate me. I have barely experienced public statements of faith in Baku so far.

I look at Samira and some of the young men from the youth organisation. I try to read their faces. I am searching for traces of approval or dislike, but most of them look indifferent. If at all, some of them look annoyed. One guy grimaces in disgust. The moment leaves me confused.

We have almost reached the graves of the alley. Nobody is talking anymore. The rhythmic sound of our steps trails away and the *Muğam* music fills the cold air with a touch of sadness.

I take a deep breath and look around.

On top of a high flagpole, I see a big Azerbaijani flag dancing in the wind. At the entrance of the alley, the masses of people pass a flame and arrangements of red flowers. I notice the uniformity of the crowd and the shared, coordinated acting. I carefully try to act the same. It increases my feeling of solidarity with the people around me. But I will probably never feel the same intense sadness as Samira, since those are *her* people who died 24 years ago for *her* country and not for *mine* (field notes from 20 January 2014, Baku).

The march down the martyrs' alley takes place in an atmosphere of shared feelings of both grief and pride. Samira mourns the people who died on 20 January 1990. At the same time, she feels proud to be Azerbaijani, to be part of the strong 'we'.

These feelings of joy and grief emerge from the momentary configuration of bodies and objects such as the *Muğam* music in the background, the red carnations, bodies moving with each other, the sound of their uniformity, and the anticipated encounter with the graves covered under masses of red carnations. In this stimulating flow of encounter, the bodies, objects and the place become through the activation of a plurality of bodily histories. Gendered becomings constitute this predominantly male commemoration ceremony. As I observed at the majority of events conducted in public space – in contrast to activities in private space – the larger share of participants is male. The youth group I am accompanying is predominantly male as is the group of believers calling on Allah. Furthermore, the buried bodies are personified as mainly male martyrs, composing a male martyrdom.

The specificity of the place, the Alley of Martyrs, contributes to this moment of affective becoming as it renders national significance. The alley extends on a prominent elevation southwest of the city centre of Baku. Climbing up a couple of dozens of stairs at the entrance of the passageway where a big Azerbaijani flag is flying in the wind (Figure 20), you see yourself confronted with the sight of a long alley clad in clean, wheat-coloured sandstone. The portraits and names of the victims of 20 January 1990 are engraved in anthracite-coloured, polished marble plates lining the lane towards a sandstone tower. An eternal flame flickers in the centre and illuminates the tower's ornamental cupola. Green conifers cover the cemetery below the alley.

The Alley of Martyrs becomes in the moment of encountering the purposeful selection and arrangement of different objects, colours and materials. The tombstones give Azerbaijani people a face and a history, the flag marks it as Azerbaijani territory, the *Muğam* music takes possession of the air and the absence of anything that could interfere with the becoming of this national site ensures the intensity of affective stimulation. As the specific assortment of elements encourages thoughtfulness and consternation, the connection of different bodies at a time, such as the visitors, the marble graves, and the eternal flame, boosts the felt distinctiveness of this heritage site. The alley becomes in this momentary configuration of bodies and objects and thus makes the Alley of Martyrs a place where the Azerbaijani nation can be experienced. At the same time, spiritual and gendered differences in people's experience of the 20 January commemoration reveal how the situational becoming of this national heritage site is contested. The moment of bewilderment following the believers' invocations of 'Allahu Akbar!' suggest bodily varieties of affective stimulation and disputed embodiments of national representations.


Figure 20: Decorated entrance to the Alley of Martyrs in Baku on 20 January 2014 (Photo: Elisabeth Militz, 2014).

In the moment of experiencing the commemoration march, I came to understand how affective capacities differ. By showing compassion instead of grief, I find myself blending Samira, the other people around me, and the buried bodies into a conglomerate of bodies constituting the Azerbaijani nation. Confirming my cultural Otherness, this moment of affective encounter, more than any other situation, makes me feel different from the bodies around me. I recognise the Azerbaijani nation in the shared sadness and people's placid coordination of movements. Even though the situation prompts different thoughts and feelings in me than in the other people around me, I feel affected by the moment – this particular configuration of bodies and objects around me such as the music, the marching people, and the tombstones. In a bizarre and incomplete way the joint march along the alley makes me feel corporeally connected to the bodies surrounding me. At the same time, feeling uninvolved with the national history and a lack of biographical significance of 20 January 1990 leaves me with a sense of disconnection.

Samira, on the contrary, feels connected to others; she talks about how '*we* lost many people' and about '*our* culture' and '*our* national music.' The situation and the practices incorporated by the

different bodies marching down the alley seem natural to her. The felt connection between and with these other bodies, the music and the shared histories even constitutes her body when she, later on, refers to the music being in her blood and in her heart.

The encounter between different bodies and objects constituted through affective practices such as the synchronic marching, laying red carnations on the graves and invoking Allah, allows for sensing those collective connections – despite the simultaneousness of different bodily experiences of what feels national – as well as disconnections. Incorporated mundane practices stimulate different bodies to resonate with each other. With Ahmed (2007, 156), the bodies act 'habitually', as they repeat learned commemoration practices in their unexceptional performance of routines. Repetitions of learned practices such as dropping red carnations on the tombstones, remembering the dead together with others or keeping silent while visiting a commemoration emerge as corporeal articulations of the national. These embodied practices produce what is perceived as national affected by the idea to commemorate martyrs who are understood as people who died *for* the nation. Bodily actions as 'somatic memories embedded in us [and other bodies] through socialization processes over many years' (Waterton and Dittmer 2014, 133) help to ensure the 'sacred quality' (ibid.) of the Alley of Martyrs.

What is more, the conception of an Azerbaijani nation being victimised and thus vulnerable becomes present as a felt reality when passing the graves and gazing at the engraved faces of the – dominantly male – dead whose carved eyes rest innocently but remorselessly on the passers-by. The moment the victims of 20 January were buried and are remembered as martyrs, the dead bodies become the 'body of the nation' (Ahmed 2001, 365). As 'a shared "object of feeling"' (Ahmed 2004c, 13, quotes in original) the nation arises as a vulnerable body of love (ibid., 130) in moments of affective encounter. Joyful feelings of belonging are thus bound up with bodily histories of suffering.

The music in the background plays a key role in sparking those sentiments. As a culturally scripted sound that combines specific tone sequences and instruments the music harbours the potential to trigger feelings (Wood 2002, 69). The sound floats between different bodies, connects them and thus enables felt experiences of something shared. I thus recognise the music as a kind of contagious power stimulating affective practices. The momentary encounter of bodies and objects converts the march down the martyrs' alley into a 'public sphere of collective intimacy through which official mass nationality stays familiar' (Berlant 1997, 179). The feeling of sharing national grief and pride results from feeling an intimate belonging.

The assumption that affective dispositions are universal (Waterton 2013) towards what feels national guides the formal composition of the commemoration process on 20 January to mourn a male martyrdom. The arrangement of bodies and objects such as the *Muğam* music, the red carnations, the site of tombstones portraying pictures of the dead, the Azerbaijani flag, masses of people visiting the place at the same day aims at inducing feelings of national belonging, pride and grief. The prevalence of one way of commemorating the dead and remembering historical milestones of the national development, however, is problematic. Alternative assessments of the historic events become inappropriate or even wrong such as when the group of men somewhere in the crowd praying to God caused people in my company to show their dismay.

In contrast to the commemoration of Khojaly, it is not the visceral experiences of shared pain that merge people into the body of the nation. Rather, it is the affectivity of pride that connects bodies through shared feelings of national strength. My informant Eldar (conversation on 8 February 2014) explains this to me as follows:

> 20 January is the result of the freedom movement of the Azerbaijani people. When Azerbaijanis went on the streets, they claimed independence. 20 January was a result or product of all these campaigns, of all these demonstrations against the Soviets. I am proud of those demonstrations, of those courageous people who demanded independence from the Soviet empire. I am proud of them and I am deeply sorry for those who died on that day. *(He pauses for a moment).* I am deeply sorry for those people and I am proud of them that, without any guns, with flowers, they stood in front of the tanks.

Rather than mourning the dead, Eldar revitalises the killed bodies from 20 January. For him, the people who got killed are victors instead of victims. He emphasises 'Black January' as a milestone on the Azerbaijani people's way for national independence from the Soviet Union. Interestingly, what these people did on 20 January 1990 engenders, almost 25 years later, a feeling of pride with Eldar. Even though he himself was, at that time, three years old, living with his family in Ganja and not knowing anybody in person who participated during the demonstrations in January 1990, he feels at one with these people. It is this feeling of pride that emerges when he thinks and talks about 20 January that connects himself with the dead from that event producing a feeling of belonging to the imagined community of Azerbaijanis.

This felt community consisting of proud and courageous Azerbaijani people, however, is a constrained one. Men and women do not contribute on equal terms to the national pride Eldar is experiencing.

> On 20 January, when the Soviet Army was entering Baku, me and two of my brothers, the three of us and my father – actually my father took us – we were standing in front of the Soviet tanks. And we were lucky that we were standing in that street that is today called Heydar Aliyev Avenue where the normal soldiers were passing by with the tanks. Not those soldiers that were killing people inside the city. So, these soldiers are kind of dispersing us. They were shooting above our heads, not at us and then they dispersed us and my father took me back. I was eleven years old at that time. Yes, that was a case (*he pauses*).
>
> It is in my memory. This tragedy is still in my memory, because whenever I talk about it—Yes, I participated in the national independence movements! I was at the demonstrations, I was at the rallies, I was participating! So, that's why I am still a pro-independence person. Because we could have been dead that day, all three brothers, my father, the mother didn't come with us, but—And my father was really enthusiastic, let's go and stand in front of the Russian tanks. He would never do that again right now, but at that time the enthusiasm was at such a high level. I saw with my own eyes how one guy brought his car and his car was a VAZ-2104. This was one of the most expensive cars during that time in the Soviet Union. It is similar to Porsche Cayenne right now, the price the same. The guy with the car brought the car to that place and he saw the tanks and he said that he will turn on the engine and move the car in front of a tank in order to blow up that tank. Can you imagine anybody right now in Azerbaijan to do the same thing with his Porsche Cayenne?! I would hardly think so (*he pauses*).
>
> It was a heroic time. I mean whenever people talk about 20 January I don't look at the tragedy, I look at the heroism. That with your bare hands you stand in front of the tanks. You throw stones at the tanks. This is a heroic moment. It's not a bad moment. It is not a tragic moment. We celebrate the birth of our new republic. The new Azerbaijan was born then, through blood, but it was born. Before that they could never think about becoming independent from the Soviet Union (conversation with Azad on 17 July 2012, Baku).

While Azad shares Eldar's assessment of 20 January as a day to remember because of its gain for the Azerbaijani independence movement and not because of its tragedy, he is more specific about the people who should receive credit for national heroism: men, or to be more precise, Azerbaijani men. He talks about the moment when he was out on the streets on 20 January together with two of his brothers and his father. In fact, the father actively made his sons come with him. Besides, Azad identifies the owner of the car who imagines blowing up a Soviet tank – this fearless member of the Azerbaijani national community – as male, too. Azad thus reproduces the feeling of commemorating an exclusively male martyrdom on 20 January not just through referring solely to men but also by propagating the heroism he glorifies as a male heroism.

The active involvement of women in the Azerbaijani independence movement, on the contrary, remains absent from the ways in which he recalls the events of 20 January 1990. On the one hand, his mother becomes unconcerned with the national battle for independence by not attending the street demonstrations on 20 January. Implicit to his account of the events of 20 January is the largely undisputed social expectation for women to commit to home and hearth instead of shedding their blood on the battlefield. He is not the only one of my informants who would neglect the role women played in fighting for national independence. These stories of the ways in which people recall Azerbaijani history thus reaffirm 'a gendered discourse which equates bravery with masculinity [...] [and] commemorates women in terms of their primary domestic chores' (Dowler 1998, 167) as mothers and housewives.

On the other hand, Azad reproduces the sense that the Azerbaijani home country is a motherland (and not a fatherland) when he praises the gain from the Azerbaijani men's activism on 20 January, the 'birth of the new [independent] republic,' through employing the metaphor of giving birth. Femininity as constituting part of Azerbaijani national identity simply provides the platform for Azerbaijan's active masculinity to thrive. In the end, it is the feeling of pride in men that connects different bodies for a shared national belonging.

What is even more striking, however, is Azad's assessment of the temporality of this national heroism. While Azad believes that his father would today 'never' confront armed forces by literally putting his body in the way of soldiers and tanks, he encouraged his sons on 20 January 1990 to do exactly this, 'to stand in front of the Russian tanks.' The national heroism remains confined to this moment in the historical past and turns into a fantasy of a glorious, yet long ago Azerbaijani nation whose devoted citizens would be willing to give their lives, and cars, for the sake of national independence. The moment Azad praises the man who would offer his most expensive car in the fight for independence suggests an affective recoding of nationalism over time. Through admitting that he hardly believes that an Azerbaijani citizen today would sacrifice 'his Porsche Cayenne', Azad's words read like a confession that in contemporary Azerbaijan an affective nationalism that unites different bodies through their shared national fate might have been replaced by an affective consumerism that binds different bodies through their shared participation in a capitalist consumer culture. The affective processes at stake, that means bodies' shared orientations towards objects that engender felt communities of similar emotional investments, remain the same. Yet, the object constituting a unifying desire is no longer the hope for national independence; but, the wish to be able to participate in a global consumer culture. As a consequence, the affective consumerism that aligns people all over the world sharing this same wish, exceeds the affective nationalism at stake

in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, the moment of affective encounter that inspired Azad to share this story with me in the first place indicates that, although contemporary experiences of nationalism in Azerbaijan might not emerge through a shared bodily devotion, feeling national belonging might still unfold through a similar emotional investment in the fantasy of the Azerbaijani nation of 1990.

## 6.3 Conclusion: the binding capacities of affect

The very idea of nationalism I develop throughout this thesis implies an ontology of multiplicities that becomes relevant in moments of affective encounter such as the momentary arrangements of different bodies, objects or places engendering feelings of national belonging or alienation. If through affective nationalism bodies become the bearers of national feelings and meaning and through their different capacities to affect and to be affected maintain diverse orientations towards objects, such as the celebration of a holiday or a smell, then the encounters between these differently affected and affecting bodies and objects effect communities of sharing and not sharing. This chapter has explored the ways in which the affectivities of pain and pride engender felt communities legitimising the Azerbaijani nation.

The annual remembrance of the killings of Khojaly on 26 February 1992 symbolise like no other commemoration event in Azerbaijan the pain the national body feels about the continuing territorial occupation of the Karabakh regions. To compensate the loss of national bodies and the ignominy of defeat in the conflict with Armenian armed forces, the commemoration practices exaggerate the visceral identifications with the victims of the attacks to a degree that is difficult to account for. Yet it is precisely this affectivity of pain that is difficult to endure which engenders a community of national consternation. Giving rise to a feeling of belonging to a national community of Azerbaijanis is a shared historical presence of suffering that binds different bodies together.

On the contrary, the ritualised commemoration of 20 January 1990 shows the ways in which processes of becoming in a more-than-human flow and varying bodily capacities for affection effect the momentary emergence of a community of shared feelings of national pride. While the remembrance of Khojaly employs and reproduces a logic of victimisation of the national community and national outrage, the memories of the so-called Black January include elements of mourning the dead as well as enjoying a sense of national strength. In fact, the people who got killed on 20 January 1990 seemed to have died for a reason: for the independence of the Azerbaijani nation from the Soviet Union. The dead become male martyrs praised for their heroic selflessness

for the sake of the nation. Hence, joyful as well as painful affections stimulate the experience of the embodied knowledge of belonging to a distinct national community.

# 7 Wanna-be Turkey: the desiring nation

> *The Turks, our brothers, would come to Baku, and united with the Turks our people would become one big nation of believers.*
>
> *— Kurban Said, Ali and Nino (2000, 84)*

Remember the three core questions that guide my thesis' examination of the ways in which nationalism is affective. First, how could something as ideologically invented and abstract as the nation emerge as a real feeling and as a naturalised experience? Second, in what ways do these emergent national feelings connect and disconnect different bodies and objects and evoke communities of shared emotions? And third, how does nationalism continue to manifest in people's everyday lives? This chapter seeks answers to the third question through examining the last of the four processes that trigger affective nationalism, or, to put it in another way, through focusing on the ways feelings of national belonging and alienation persist.

Enquiring about the continuous becoming of national experiences seems particularly relevant considering the diversity, incompleteness and insufficiency that mark feelings of national attachment and detachment. Remember some situations in the previous three chapters that recall various ways in which the becoming and felt experience of national bodies, objects, practices and spaces fail to fulfil the expectations attached to them. In chapter 5, for example, Elnara remains torn between her pleasure of remembering the enactment of *Novruz* rituals and the love for her child. The ways in which she describes her dilemma with a wistful voice suggest that a holistic enjoyment of performing *Novruz* rituals and the prioritised and unconditional love for her child exclude one another. In chapter 6, to recall another example, people grieve for fellow citizens who have lost their lives during militant aggressions by foreign troops in the early 1990s shortly after Azerbaijan gained independence. Despite the nation's apparent vulnerability and the unrelatedness of the contingent encounter between grieving people and dead bodies, however, people neither defend themselves against the assimilation into a national collective nor despise what they experience as the Azerbaijani nation. Quite to the contrary, the ritualistic commemoration events seem to strengthen both the sense of a venerable and admirable Azerbaijani nation as well as the bonds with the dead, instead. Fictitious, incomplete and disappointing experiences of nation and national attachment or detachment thus manage to stick around. The feeling to belong to an

imagined national community remains attractive to the extreme that people are willing to die for a nation.

This chapter explores the ways in which people continue to enjoy identifying with Azerbaijan and as Azerbaijani despite the nation's continuous failures. Drawing on material illustrating Azerbaijani people's ambivalent assessments of the national other Turkey, I argue that the Azerbaijani national identity becomes enjoyable in moments of aligning as well as separating Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis from Turkey and Turks. On my way to find answers to the question of how the connections between Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis and Turkey and Turks structure the emergence of a desirable national identification, I am following Žižek (2008, 9) in realising that 'the original question of desire is not directly "What do I want?", but "What do others want from me? What do they see in me? What am I to others?'

## 7.1 Looking up to him, the big brother Turkey

Most Azerbaijan scholars observe an affinity for Turkey – as the idea of a territorially defined nation state that is a political, economic and military partner – and Turkishness – as a sense of embodying a specific ethnicity, living a particular culture and conducting daily routines that are shared among people – in present-day Azerbaijan. They attest people in Azerbaijan and in Turkey a shared cultural and ethnic heritage (Luscombe and Kazdal 2014) and understand Azerbaijan as 'a Muslim country of ethnic Turks' (Diuk 2012, 67). This academic literature calls the great majority of people inhabiting Azerbaijan 'Azerbaijani Turks' (Balayev 2015). Cornell (2011, 362) hints at the akin relation between Turks and Azerbaijanis by denoting Azerbaijani denizens as 'Turkish people's ethnic "cousins".' Linking these narratives of a shared ethnic origin with observations that people in post-Soviet Azerbaijan increasingly consume Turkish food, goods and Turkish soap operas and news, renders Azerbaijani people's contemporary identifications with Turkey and as Turks, legitimate, logical and even inevitable. Nadia Diuk (2012, 69), for example, claims that 'the identity of independent Azerbaijan, which is still evolving, is even now radically different from the identity of Soviet Azerbaijan. Buried for many years, its Turkic identity is acquiring definition.' Yet, what does this Turkic identity do in constituting Azerbaijani national identifications?

When I once asked Elnara what she thinks about the fact that many people in Azerbaijan identify as ethnic Turks, she replied:

> We love Turks, but it wasn't like that twenty years ago. In the Soviet Union they told us "Turks are bad" and "Russians are good". But when the Soviet Union ended we saw that

> the Turks are more developed than we are and that everything is more developed in Turkey. That's why we love them and we want to be like them. Turkey is like our big brother […]. But it wasn't like that in the past; we even thought that the language was strange and wrong. When we watched TV, we thought "Uuuaaaahhh! How are they talking?! It's wrong!" But now we are very close because of the language (transcript from conversation with Elnara on 20 January 2014, Baku),

Elnara asserts the popular belief that Turkey is Azerbaijan's brother nation. By characterising the relationship between Turks and Azerbaijanis as a bond of 'love' and calling Turkey 'our big brother', the connection between the two communities obtains an exclusive quality. Although, in other situations, it was not uncommon for my informants to praise the achievements of German people in order to connect with me, for example, people did not express signs of affection. Neither would they understand people from Azerbaijan and people from Germany as brothers or sisters. Within the unique brotherly relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey, though, Turkey becomes the *big* brother as the one that is already 'more developed' that serves as a role model and provides orientation.

Elnara's narrative of an Azerbaijani-Turkish *brother*hood ties in with my descriptions of the becoming of a gendered Azerbaijani nation in earlier chapters. Remember the gendered *Novruz Bayram* performances in chapter 5 and how Ilgar, for example, as literally the front man in the car, drove Elnara, Leyla and myself to his mother's house in order to celebrate *Novruz* with the whole family. In chapter 6, during the 20 January remembrance, we commemorated an explicit male martyrdom and praised a male heroism. Whereas the female body becomes the site of the private and within spheres of intimacy, in family homes and closed spaces such as the woman-only teahouse, male bodies unfold as sites of public and political happenings and thus of official nation-building. In understanding the bond between Azerbaijan and Turkey as brotherhood, instead of, for example, sisterhood or even siblingship, Elnara reproduces the idea of masculinised states and publics. Indeed, it is up to men, to brothers, to act in the name of the political through, for example, defining relationships between nations and states.

Besides, for Elnara, the intimate bond between people from Azerbaijan and people from Turkey is beyond question. She emphasises that 'because of the language', Azerbaijanis feel close to Turks. She, thus, not only reproduces the idea that the Turkish-Azerbaijani language counts as predominant marker of Azerbaijani national identity. Moreover, her constant usage of 'we' discloses how she understands the popular fondness for Turks as something unifying Azerbaijanis today. She claims that as 'we' [the Azerbaijani people] speak the same language, 'we thought that the language [the Turkish people speak on TV] was strange and wrong.' In the moment she

remembers watching TV during the Soviet era the differences between the Turkish and Azerbaijani languages turn from feeling very different to feeling the same. Her sense of a natural, intimate alliance with Turks, thus does not only produce a legitimate national Azerbaijani 'we', but also a community within which both Azerbaijanis and Turks hold a natural place.

The felt brotherhood between Azerbaijanis and Turks is, however, everything but self-evident. According to Elnara people in Azerbaijan have been feeling much closer to Turks since the country's independence from the Soviet Union. Hence, the ways in which Elnara talks about her experiences in the past and the present also emphasise how feelings of difference and productions of otherness shift with time and context. The alliance with Turkey materialises as a situational relation. In the context of the Soviet Union, Elnara remembers how the Turkish language sounded awkward and flawed. Her negative assessment of Turkish and Turks when she exclaims, 'Uuuaaaahhh! How are they talking?! It's wrong!,' reflects how she had internalised the Soviet political practice of disregarding any cultural, ethnic or linguistic ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey (Bolukbasi 2011; Cornell 2011). The break-up of the Soviet Union and the sudden obsolescence of Soviet ideological practices, however, allowed people to reassess the ways in which they could experience the Turkish language. While the language unfolded as a marker of linguistic difference during the Soviet era, linguistic similarities now serve to justify people's kinship with Turks.

Yet, it is Elnara's feeling of closeness towards Turkey and Turks and not a sense of sameness that renders her identification as Azerbaijani appealing. Elnara does not say: 'we *are* Turks'. Instead, she affirms: 'we *want to be like* them.' As her statement literally echoes Lacan's (1998, 29) understanding of the '*manque-à-être*, a "want-to-be"' as 'the function of desire,' the relationship between Turks and Azerbaijanis unfolds, I argue, as a relation of desire. This relation of desire structures Elnara's identification as Azerbaijani. Her alignment with a '*we'* of other people who 'want to be like [Turks]' implies in principle her *want to be* Azerbaijani. Her identification as Azerbaijani feels incomplete, insatiable and unfinished. Establishing Turks as a role model for Azerbaijanis' development provides a remedy. As 'to love, is essentially, to wish to be loved' (Lacan 1998, 253), her affection for Turks engenders a pleasing image of the 'we' of Azerbaijani people.

> As a specular mirage, love is essentially deception. It is situated in the field established at the level of the pleasure reference, of that sole signifier necessary to introduce a perspective centred on the Ideal point, capital I, placed somewhere in the Other, from which the Other sees me, in the form I like to be seen,

argues Lacan (ibid., 268). While the Turks, in Elnara's case, personify this Other, her wishful assessments of Turkish and Azerbaijani people neither precede nor preexist their momentary unfolding as relation of desire. Rather, she idealises her image of Azerbaijanis and admires Turks through and within moments of affective encounter between, for example, herself, memories and myself. Yet, these moments of affective encounter stimulate the becoming of her affirmative feelings of national belonging precisely through the relation of desire that structures Elnara's identification as Azerbaijani.

Whereas Elnara describes the relationship between Turks and Azerbaijanis as a bond of love, my informant Ilkin feels like a Turk in the moment he identifies as Azerbaijani. By stating that, 'Armenians have always called us Turks and they still do; so, they know well who we are and we were [called] Turks until 1936, after all,' he once suggested during a conversation we had in a café in downtown Baku (21 May 2013) that Azerbaijanis *are* Turks. Ilkin justifies Azerbaijani people's rightful identification as Turks by referring to the mid-1930s, when Stalin dissolved the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and established the sovereign Soviet Republic Azerbaijan. According to Ilkin, legitimately calling Azerbaijani people Turks corresponds to historic truth prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union. In fact, Cornell (2011) illustrates how the official (re)naming of people inhabiting the territory of present-day Azerbaijan was part of the practice of Sovietisation: 'whereas the Turkic inhabitants of Azerbaijan had been registered as "Turks" in the 1926 census, in 1936 they became "Azerbaijanis"' (ibid., 39). Through designating the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, Stalin formally established the idea of a distinct Azerbaijanihood that was supposed to originate and develop independently from Turks (Rohozinski 2008). Listening to Ilkin in 2013, however, suggests that the political strategy to design Azerbaijanihood disconnected from any Turkish heritage or influence did not work out. In fact, through emphasising the *being* of the 'we' of the Azerbaijani people instead of focussing on the question of '*who* [they] are,' Ilkin aligns the being of Azerbaijanis with the being of Turks. While he assures that 'Armenians [...] know well who [they] are,' he leaves the *who* undefined. He determines that Azerbaijanis *are* and what they were called. He misses, though, to explain *who* they are.

Nevertheless, like Elnara, Ilkin does not fuse Azerbaijanis and Turks into an inseparable unity. National identification as Azerbaijani does not become synonymous with national identification as Turk. After all, Ilkin claims there are three groups: a 'they', the Armenians, an 'us' and a 'we', the Azerbaijanis and 'Turks'. While his statement fixes separate categories of people, he senses an Azerbaijani 'we' through *almost* equalising Turks and Azerbaijanis. He identifies with a 'we' of Azerbaijani people through expressing that Azerbaijanis are not just Azerbaijanis but, actually,

more than that: they are Turks. This wish to be more than Azerbaijani unfolds as an object of desire in this relation between Turks and Azerbaijanis that engenders the appeal of identifying as Azerbaijani. According to Žižek (2008, 10), 'the object [of desire] is precisely that which is "in the subject more than the subject itself", that which I fantasize that the Other [...] sees in me.' Ilkin identifies with a 'we' of Azerbaijani people in the moment the idea of an alignment of Turks and Azerbaijanis produces an image of Azerbaijan that equalises Azerbaijanis with Turks and thus, Azerbaijan with Turkey. The affective teaming up with Turks unfolds as a momentary experience of an Azerbaijan that, for example, is no longer only inhabited by ten million people on a territory about the size of the state of Austria, but more than 75 million people on a territory that is nine times as large. 'The imagined membership to a [...] Turkish community of solidarity grants Azerbaijanis an alleged great historic and political significance,' concludes Raoul Motika (2009, 311 translation by E.M.). Or, as Lacan (2014, 124) would put it: identifying as Turk in Azerbaijan indicates 'a desire whose essence is to show oneself as other, and yet, in showing oneself as other, thereby to designate oneself.' In order to become an experience of greatness and joy, an Azerbaijani national identity does not change in itself. Rather, the Turkish component in identifying as Azerbaijani or with Azerbaijan complements an already existing awareness of a legitimate national identity that feels real, yet incomplete.

Elnara and Ilkin express their closeness towards Turkey and Turks in a similar, but not the same way. The relationships towards Turkey and Turkishness that they recall exceed the identification with Azerbaijan and with Azebaijaniness. Yet, the ways in which the emergent relations of desire structure their identifications as Azerbaijanis differ. For Elnara it is a lack, a feeling of incompleteness in her identification as Azerbaijani that makes her feel 'almost' Turkish, or *want to be* like Turks. For Ilkin, on the contrary, the relations of desire structuring his identification as Azerbaijani manifest as felt ambiguity that remains, however, impossible. He sees Azerbaijani people as Turks through their very identifications as Azerbaijanis. As much as Azerbaijanis and Turks do not merge into one identity, as much does he assert that Azerbaijanis are Turks.

Official histories of Azerbaijan's state and nation-building reflect Elnara's and Ilkin's feelings of an inevitable proximity between Turks and Azerbaijanis. Governmental narratives reinforce the idea that an Azerbaijani national identity becomes compelling through the specific dynamic connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan. The later Soviet leadership, in particular, pushed opportunities for Turkish identification among Azerbaijanis. While the political leadership of the first decades of the Soviet rule aimed at dissociating the Azerbaijani national identity from Turkish historical influences, 'the Brezhnev era enabled Azerbaijan [...] to re-nationalize the republic by furthering ethnic

homogenization or ethnic consolidation' (Bolukbasi 2011, 56). The former president of the Republic of Azerbaijan and first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party during the 1970s and 1980s Heydar Aliyev, in particular, contributed to developments of Azerbaijani national identification and thus also to the cultivation of people's Turkic heritage during the second half of the Soviet Union. Aliyev, however, seemed to be less interested in actively influencing debates on what constitutes Azerbaijani national identities and more concerned about engaging political strategies that granted him benevolence and respect in foreign as well as domestic affairs. At the same time as he encouraged bilingualism and discharged members of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, he strictly adhered to instructions coming from the Soviet leadership in Moscow (Bolukbasi 2011).

Moreover, the Soviet tabooing of a Turkish ethnic origin of Azerbaijanis made people even more aware of their alleged belonging.

> An Azerbaijani intellectual related how hearing children speak Russian among themselves on the streets in the early 1980s made many patriotically minded Azeris seriously worried about the survival of their nation. The same intellectual related how the discovery of a package of Turkish-made spaghetti in a local supermarket lifted his spirit: if a food package could travel from Turkey to Azerbaijan, there was hope for breaking the cultural isolation from its ethnic kin that Azerbaijan was experiencing (Cornell 2011, 46).

Following Cornell's observation, the public denial of Turkish Azerbaijani relations during the Soviet Union inspired people to keep narratives about a Turkish Azerbaijani kinship alive instead of to erase Azerbaijani people's kindred feelings for Turks.

This also suggests that rather than turning into a '*homo sovieticus*' (Motika 2009, 320), that is a people who has no relevant independent genesis and history beyond Russian colonialization, most people experienced everyday live in its cultural and linguistic diversity. According to Cornell (2011, 45), by the 1980s, 'a type of double culture [had] evolved, with the Azerbaijani Turkish language being confined to the home and social interactions, and Russian increasingly taking over the domains of officialdom, science, and technical language.'

At the time of my field work, almost 25 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, many people still switch between Russian and Azerbaijani depending on the context of the interaction. My friend Vali, for example, who studied computer science in the Russian-track of a public university, continues to communicate with his course mates in Russian even after having graduated from university. When talking to his parents or to a service provider in a store, however, Vali switches to Azerbaijani. For some other people, such as my friend Nisa and her family, it is the other way

around. Russian is Nisa's first language that she uses to speak with her family and friends. Her work environment, a public university, however, demands oral and written fluency in Azerbaijani.

Ideologically charged language reforms following the breakup of the Soviet Union transformed the Azerbaijani language into the lingua franca of everyday live and within public institutions. In fact, the ideological void that the breakup of the Soviet Union left behind turned into a welcome opportunity to fill the 'vacuum in the shared social/national ideology and practice [...] [with] ideas about the Azerbaijani language and its role in enhancing national belonging,' as Jala Garibova (2009, 20) observes. The effects these language policies had and continue to have in constituting and shaping feelings of national belonging in Azerbaijan, however, remain obscure. Precisely because Azerbaijan scholars such as Cornell (2011) attest to language a significant influence in forming ideas about the Azerbaijani nation, the change of language ideologies and linguistic practices also impacts the dissolution respectively consolidation of Azerbaijan's binational, 'brotherly' relations. While Soviet colonialism had established Russia 'as the "elder brother" and the "leading nation" of the Soviet multi-national state' (Kuzio 2002, 242), present-day popular belief in Azerbaijan defines Turkey as a kindred nation echoing an 'ideal of a unique bond between Turkey and Azerbaijan' (Murinson 2010, 36).

The endeavours to undertake language reforms, and thus to advance the use of the Turkic Azerbaijani language, emerge within the general promotion of pan-Turkish sentiments and the idea of a unified nation of Azerbaijanis and Turks in the early 1990s, after Azerbaijan became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991. Although political disillusion due to disagreements between the Azerbaijani and the Turkish governments arose by the mid-1990s, Azerbaijan's former president Heydar Aliyev's slogan '*Bir Millet, Iki Devlet* [one nation, two states]' (Murinson 2010, 95), which he coined during a speech in front of the Turkish Parliament in 1995 (Cornell 2011, 368), still marks the commonly accepted narrative of a union between the Azerbaijani and the Turkish nation states. Despite revealing affinity and the desire for sameness, this catch phrase depicts the core of the ambivalent history on Turkey and being Turkish in Azerbaijan. In the moment both nations are imagined as one, their separation into two states registers the impossibility and therefore deficiency of this unity. Only because 'desire [...] meets its limit somewhere' (Lacan 1998, 31) and thus remains unfinished in itself do the relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan continue to constitute the possibilities to happily identify with Azerbaijan or as Azerbaijani.

The catchphrase produces an incomplete idea of Azerbaijan as well as an insatiable sense of Turkey. As 'desire is in itself identical to lack' (Lacan 2015, 63), it is precisely this lack of satisfaction, this feeling that neither the identification with Turkey or as Turks nor the identification with Azerbaijan

or as Azerbaijani may please enough on their own account, that constitutes this relation of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The imagined feeling that the identification as Azerbaijani and/or with Azerbaijan feels complete and satisfying emerges as 'a hole in reality, [as a] point of impossibility filled in with fantasy' (Žižek 2008, xiv). Narratives about an ethnic kinship with Turks and closeness towards Turkey thus engender experiences of a great Azerbaijan that is big, powerful, influential and undefeatable. Despite the elusiveness and volatility of these experiences the fantasy about their possible fulfilment through relating to Turkey and Turks in identifying with Azerbaijan or as Azerbaijani keeps them, continuously, alive. In other words, 'the phantasy is the support of desire [...]. The subject sustains himself as desiring in relation to an ever more complex signifying ensemble' (Lacan 1998, 185).

The fact that it was Heydar Aliyev who coined the catchphrase '*Bir Millet, Iki Devlet*' also shows how relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan emerge as a form of political 'engineering of the affective register[s]' (Thrift 2004, 58) of nation formation. Let me explain this point in more detail. On the one hand, Heydar as well as Ilham Aliyev's governments advocate a national ideology of Azerbaijanism rather than Turkism. When in the mid-1990s the Aliyev government determined that the only politically valid national identity will be called Azerbaijani and determined the label 'Azerbaijani' to denote the official language of the country, the government explicitly built on the Soviet nationalities policy that had established several distinct nationalities domiciled in the Soviet empire (Motika 2009, 301). The aim of this Sovietisation measure that addressed people living on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan was precisely to isolate them from any Turkish ethnic roots or kindred feelings for Turkish people. On the other hand, the political and societal leadership in Azerbaijan may choose from a variety of political and economic allies apart from Turkey. Millions of people identifying as ethnic Azerbaijanis, for example, live in Northern Iran (Shaffer 2002) and migrants from Azerbaijan comprise a significant part of the labour migration into Russia (Mansoor and Quillin 2006). Why then does former president Heydar Aliyev create this special and, in fact, exclusive bond between Azerbaijanis and Turks?

Fraternal ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey might not be the most obvious ones. People do not necessarily share cultural practices. Both national cuisines, for example, vary. While people consider *Ayran*, *Lahmaçun* and coffee, for example, without doubt as Turkish specialities, Azerbaijani food does not know related equivalents. Besides, as you will discover in the second part of the chapter, people in Azerbaijan and people in Turkey maintain different conceptions of moral decency and corporeal values. Yet, people in Azerbaijan reproduce the idea that Turks and Azerbaijanis belong together.

The bonding between both communities serves the banal reproduction of a political, a nationalising project. The consolidation of a shared history and origin through governmental support augments the affective capacities of Turkey, Turkish products and Turks. Moments of affective encounter stimulate the becoming of relations of desire between Azerbaijan and Azerbaijaniness and Turkey and Turkishness that render the identification with senses of Azerbaijan enjoyable. People's delight in identifying with Azerbaijan, in return, facilitates Aliyev's nation-building agenda of promoting Azerbaijanism and legitimates his and his successor's claims to power. For the principle of how relations of desire function to incite identifications with Azerbaijan and as Azerbaijani, it is secondary who or what becomes the frame of reference such as Turkey as role model or big brother. What is crucial, by contrast, are moments of experiencing that this frame of reference supports the desiring sense of an Azerbaijani self-assessment in light of what an Other, such as the world community of nations, might expect. The idea that 'the subject's desire [is] constituting itself from the desire of the Other' (Lacan 1998, 251), then implies that the world divided into different nations wherein which only national constructs hold a place produces the desire to identify with Azerbaijan or as Azerbaijani.

Yet, why do scholars and my informants alike describe the relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan as a *brother*hood? How does this felt *brother*hood render identifications as Azerbaijani appealing?

Let's take a look at the following picture (Figure 21) stating '*Bir Ananın, Iki Oğlu* [One Mother (of), Two Sons]' that I came across in my Facebook news feed once. Right on top of the writing you can see how the Turkish flag on the left touches the Azerbaijani flag on the right. The actual author of the illustration is unknown but I have come across the same picture in an online newspaper article as well as in internet fora. I consider the picture thus as commonly accepted and widely distributed and used to illustrate the relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

It is no coincidence that the illustration reads like a gendered adaptation of Heydar Aliyev's slogan '*Bir Millet, Iki Devlet*.' Echoing the inherent ambivalence and ideological function of the '*Bir Millet, Iki Devlet*' slogan, the picture signifies the Turkish-Azerbaijani nation as a mother and the Azerbaijani and the Turkish state as her two sons.


Figure 21: Illustration describing the relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey as a brotherhood. The translation of the wording "*Bir Ananın, Iki Oğlu*" means "One Mother (of), Two Sons" (Mehmet 2015).

I suggest that the familial metaphors of *mother* and *son*, might not have been chosen by mere accident. Within Lacan's (2006, 814) system of thought, the Mother holds a prominent position in 'occupy[ing] the place of the Other' whereby this 'Other [i]s the locus of the signifier.' That means that the Lacanian Mother, who materialises in the case of the illustration above in form of a shared national origin, and in fact, consanguine relationship between the Azerbaijani and the Turkish states, determines the place (of the Other) that promises to fulfil national desires. To put it differently, the imagination of an Azerbaijani-Turkish mother unfolds as the object of Azerbaijani national desire in itself. The Azerbaijani-Turkish mother promises a sense of unambiguity and completeness about what it means to identify as Azerbaijani. At the same time, however, the expectation from this Azerbaijani-Turkish mother remains illusionary and impossible as the fantasy of a shared blood origin does not turn, and shall not turn, the reality of two distinct states, of the two brothers, into one unified state.

Besides, constituting Azerbaijan and Turkey as brothers reveals the unacknowledged prejudice of a male statehood (McClintock 1995, 369). Patriarchy evolves as natural social and political condition within this gendered personification of the nation state. Since both, the Soviet Union's communist ideology as well as Turkish nationalism, establish Father State at the top of a paternalistic socio-political order (Delaney 1995; Nast 2003), moving the Azerbaijani flag to the level of the Turkish flag, implies a historic continuity, reproduction and a general acceptance of the same political hierarchies for Azerbaijan. Within this logic, the idea of nation connects to a passive

femininity engendering national values and ideologies. The notion of state, on the contrary, becomes through active masculinity guaranteeing political agency and power. The image thus communicates the conditions reproducing the incomplete and recurring relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan that render the identification as Azerbaijani appealing. The kindred bond between Azerbaijan and Turkey establishes and legitimises patriarchy as a natural social and political character of the Azerbaijani nation that becomes the desirable fantasy in moments of affective encounter.

## 7.2 Looking down on her, Turkish femininity

Yet, as I have pointed out before, people's imaginations of Turkey and Turks do not only yield unanimous admiration. While many of my informants stress similarities and a common ethnic and linguistic heritage, they make sure to emphasise differences between Turkey and Azerbaijan at the same time. After all, to render desiring the identifications as Azerbaijani – and not as Azerbaijani subordinated to Turks – is the objective of comparing with Turks and referring to Turkey.

> During the time of the Soviet Union people were different and we were more Russian. But now I feel like we are becoming more Turkish [...] Turkish people come here a lot, people watch Turkish TV channels a lot and people travel to Turkey a lot. Because we don't need visas and it's cheaper. They speak the same language, almost, they have the same culture, almost, traditions, manners, behaviour *(she pauses)*. And we are becoming more Turkish, I feel (transcript from conversation with Gulay on 23 July 2012, Baku).

At first, Gulay's statement reads like a copy of what Elnara and Ilkin said earlier in this chapter. Through explaining that 'we', people in Azerbaijan, 'are becoming more Turkish', she does not hesitate aligning Azerbaijanis with Turks. Similar to Elnara, Gulay justifies the recent shift in national identification patterns through pointing out how the opportunities to encounter Turks and Turkishness increased after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Yet, in contrast to Elnara, Gulay does not idolise Turks. Instead of expressing affection, she stresses the simultaneous sameness and difference of Turks and Azerbaijanis. By using the little word 'almost,' Gulay articulates the inherent ambivalence structuring relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan. She explains how Azerbaijanis 'are becoming more Turkish' only in order to dismiss this statement straight away as not the 'same language' and also not the 'same culture' rendering both nations at the same time equal and disparate. It is precisely this dialectic that the relation of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

> If one does not stress the dialectic of desire one does not understand why the gaze of others should disorganize the field of perception. It is because the subject in question is not that of the reflexive consciousness, but that of desire. One thinks it is a question of the geometral [sic] eye-point, whereas it is a question of a quite different eye (Lacan 1998, 89).

The relation of desire, that means in this case, the wish to be like Turkey and yet not, structures or, in fact, controls the becoming of the desire of identifying with Azerbaijan and as Azerbaijani. 'The gaze of others' such as a world divided into different nations organises these relations of desire between Azerbaijan and Turkey that render Azerbaijani national identity desirable. In other words, to identify with Azerbaijan or as Azerbaijani may also feel great in the moment Azerbaijanis and Turks differ.

Azerbaijanis differ from Turks in particular through feminising the Azerbaijani as well as the Turkish nationhood. Remember how the alliance between the two brothers, a male Turkish and a male Azerbaijani state, adds to the appeal of an Azerbaijani national identity. The kindred bond between the two brother states allows the imagination of a great Azerbaijan to hold a share in the Turkish state's size, influence and economic development. By contrast, feminised conceptions of a Turkish and an Azerbaijani nationhood become incompatible. The ideas about these two separate nations, should not be confused with the Azerbaijani-Turkish mother nation whose sole task is to prove a consanguine, a shared ethnic origin that legitimises the ancient existence and autochthonous claims of the Turkish and the Azerbaijani state. Apart from this shared conception of an Azerbaijani-Turkish mother nation, the relations of desire for a desirable Azerbaijani national identity engender a sense of a feminised nationhood that emerges in stark contrast to ideas comprising the values, practices and morals of the Turkish nation.

According to my informants, female beauty, purity and honour distinguish the Azerbaijani national identity from the Turkish national identity. Sharing an anecdote from an Azerbaijani friend who lives in Turkey, my informant Nurlana justifies how Azerbaijani women are naturally more beautiful than Turkish women.

> *Nurlana*: [My friend] says that women [in Turkey] after they get married don't look after themselves. [My friend] is Azerbaijani and she likes to do make-up. She does not work and all people in her neighbourhood were very surprised and were asking her, 'Günay, why are you making your hair, your nails? You do not go to work, what are you doing?' Everyone, she says, speaks about her and that she does not go to work but still wears make-up everyday.
>
> *Elisabeth*: [...] So why does she do that?

> *Nurlana*: Because in Azerbaijan it's normal. The woman is supposed be in exact form [...]. But I think this is specific to Azerbaijan (transcript from interview with Nurlana on 12 February 2014, Baku).

According to Nurlana, her friend Günay fails to be Turkish by not complying with the norm of putting on make-up for the appropriate occasion. Yet, rather than being disappointed by the fact that her friend, who lives in Turkey – that means in the admired brother state –, seems to have difficulties to adapt to local conventions, Günay's routine of using make-up satisfies Nurlana. She emphasises how Günay, by looking after herself, preserves her 'exact form', meaning that she is wearing make-up and keeps her hair styled and her nails polished each day. Since looking after oneself and wearing make-up everyday are 'specific to Azerbaijan', these personal body care practices cannot apply to Turkish beauty rituals.

Precisely because Günay fails to incorporate Turkishness, Nurlana can take pleasure in identifying as Azerbaijani. Distinguishing Günay from Turkish women suggests how she feels that this routine of looking after oneself is of higher aesthetic value to her than to not look after oneself. A specific beauty culture materialises as a desirable habit of embodying Azerbaijani womanhood and as a consequence Azerbaijani nationhood. The national identification with Azerbaijan and in particular female beauty rituals pleases Nurlana in the moment she compares her beauty ideal of Azerbaijani women to her understanding of Turkish beauty practices. By denying Turkish women the capacity of doing something, such as looking after themselves, she downgrades Turkish women and their beauty practices. Since, as Nurlana's story suggests, Turkish women do not engage in equally valued everyday body care rituals, the identification with Turkey or Turks becomes undesirable. The more the emergent Turkish national identity exhibits its deficiencies, the more the emergent Azerbaijani national identity shines in perfection.

Azerbaijani national identity does not only become desirable through comparing beauty routines of Turkish and Azerbaijani women. Nurlana's story, in fact, ties in with a supercilious narrative I have often come across during my research that assesses Turkish morality and lifestyle options in contrast to Azerbaijani values and habits as undesirable. Or, to be more precise, the Azerbaijani values and morals become attractive and desirable through this very process of distinguishing them from Turkish habits. My informant Azad, for example, discloses a commonly shared anxiety that if people would be too much immersed in Turkish everyday routines, the Azerbaijani national identity would lose some of its appeal. It thus becomes important to stress that Azerbaijanis, and especially Azerbaijani women, behave very differently from Turkish women. Here is Azad's story:

> With my wife, for example, we went to Turkey. It was her first time in Turkey. She was shocked when she saw veiled women smoking cigarettes. It's okay to smoke in Turkey. In Azerbaijan, only prostitutes smoke. But, even veiled women? Veiled women are considered to have, let's say, moral values and everything. But cigarettes are considered to be immoral. So, how can a veiled woman who does *namaz*[9] smoke cigarettes? For my wife, it didn't make sense because for her these women smoking cigarettes are whores. My wife doesn't even smoke shisha, because it's considered hwuuhff (*he puckers his lips and draws in air*), to make smoke in the same way as with cigarettes. She doesn't want to make these kinds of associations. It took us a while before I explained to her that there is nothing wrong about smoking shisha or whatever it is. But, for her perception ... Like, she grew up in a family with directions like, 'You cannot do this! You cannot behave like this! It's a wrong behaviour!' (*He pauses*). A modern woman, a conservative woman in Azerbaijan would not smoke (transcript from conversation with Azad on 17 July 2012, Baku).

In explaining to me how his wife feels about smoking, Azad reproduces a popular narrative in Azerbaijan that ties the female practice of smoking to prostitution and obscenity. He asserts this as a fact at the same time as he presents himself as breaking up this causality by attempting to convince his wife of the normality of smoking, at least of smoking shisha.

His comment reveals two ways in which the normality for Turkish women to smoke in light of the normality for Azerbaijani women to not smoke engenders the enjoyment of an Azerbaijani national identity. On the one hand, Turkishness emerges as a deprecatory female lifestyle in the moment Azad confirms that it is 'okay to smoke in Turkey.' In Azerbaijan, however, smoking indicates a woman's immoral behaviour. Heyat (2002a, 158), who considers 'cigarette-smoking [...] a highly masculinised activity in Azerbaijan,' clarifies its normative settings as follows:

> While certain etiquette regarding age and social status prevents young men from smoking in front of their elders, for women it is generally considered a sign of vulgarity and loose morals. At the same time, over the past decade increasing numbers of middle- and upper-class young women have begun to smoke privately, as a sign of ultra-modernity. [...] The severity of the taboo on women smoking in Azerbaijan seems to surpass the disapproval of traditionalists in, for example, Iran or Turkey. The incompatibility of smoking and femininity is even more striking given that drinking alcohol is not. [...] The taboo on women smoking is simply assumed to be an integral aspect of Azeri "tradition" and its rejection a marker of modernity (Heyat 2002a, 158).

The prevailing belief that the disapproval of female smoking marks a natural characteristic of the Azerbaijani national identity stigmatises women smoking. Drawing on the virtue of veiled women

[9] *Namaz* signifies the term people in Azerbaijan use to refer to the Muslim prayer that should be performed five times a day facing Mecca.

– who Azad considers least likely to smoke – Azad defines a frame of reference that allows him to assess the attractiveness of Azerbaijani women in light of the unattractiveness of Turkish women. This assessment ranges between desirable and not desirable. Azad locates the Azerbaijani woman who is not working in the sex business, and ergo does not smoke, on the place of highest desirability. The other three women, whom he identifies – the Azerbaijani sex worker, the woman in Turkey without a veil and the veiled woman – share a place at the opposite end of the scale and are labelled as undesirable.

With the help of this categorisation Azerbaijani national identification develops as the only desirable national identity. The Azerbaijani national identity becomes attractive in contrast to the Turkish women – veiled or not veiled – and the sex worker. Besides, as women in Azerbaijan do not smoke, an Azerbaijani national identity emerges as a principled and thus appealing way of life.

Because the Turkish woman emerges as an object of rejection, separating the non-smoking, perfect woman from the smoking, imperfect one, the Azerbaijani woman can emerge as the sole object of desire that renders Azerbaijani national identification desirable. In fact, it is the embodied non-smoking Azerbaijani womanhood that promises to fulfil the desire for the experience of an idealised nation. By asserting, 'a modern, a conservative woman in Azerbaijan would not smoke,' Azad references Azerbaijani female bodies that are different in their individuality and yet the same through the shared practice of not smoking. These female bodies constitute the appeal to identify with the Azerbaijani nation. As a consequence, the decision for a woman in Azerbaijan to smoke or not to smoke becomes her decision to wish to contribute as a proper part to the appeal of the Azerbaijani nation. Yet, as much as the fantasy of the nation continues to be inaccessible and its fulfilment impossible, as much does the desirable, non-smoking Azerbaijani woman remain a fantasy of the male gaze. She will never be able to fulfil his desires even if she is Azerbaijani and does not smoke.

On the other hand, and in contradiction to Azad's assessment of the women's moralities, Azad is eager to show that he unmasks the connections between sex work, smoking and femininity as an ideological trap. He tries to normalise female smoking by devaluing its alleged inappropriateness. All of a sudden, ideas of Turkey and Turkishness become desirable again. Compared to everyday routines in Azerbaijan imbued with restrictions, everyday life in Turkey allows women to smoke. Here, Turkey emerges as tolerant space in contrast to the intolerant space of Azerbaijan. According to Azad, a smoking woman contests what feels like an impasse of her Azerbaijani national identity.

If it is true that 'fantasy constitutes our desire [...] [and] literally "teaches us how to desire"' (Žižek 2008, 7) then the above examples demonstrate the ways in which the fantasy to legitimately and happily identify as Azerbaijani and with Azerbaijan produce ideas about Turkey and Turkishness. The 'radical oscillation between attraction and repulsion, between longing for the distant beloved and feeling estranged and repelled by her proximity' (Žižek 2008, 85) constitutes the relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

## 7.3 Conclusion: the national desire to persist

What I have tried to demonstrate throughout this chapter is that relations of desire between Turkey and Azerbaijan organise the affective emergence of national identifications as Azerbaijani and with Azerbaijan. At the beginning, I asked how people come to enjoy their identifications as Azerbaijani or with Azerbaijan. My analysis showed that national identification in Azerbaijan feels great in these moments when people admire Turkey and align themselves with Turks. In the moment that Turkey materialises as Azerbaijan's big brother Azerbaijan becomes more powerful, influential and even expands into an imaginary larger territory. In the moment that a Turkish woman uses less make-up than an Azerbaijani woman or even smokes, the identification with Azerbaijan or as Azerbaijani triggers pleasure. Yet, what is key to my understanding of the ways in which Azerbaijani national identification becomes desirable and thus emerges in moments of affective encounter is that the references to Turkey – be they positive or negative – emerge as main constituents nourishing the enjoyment about a fantasised Azerbaijani national identity.

The simultaneous appreciation and rejection of Turkey, Turks and Turkishness do not emerge in opposition. Rather, the admiration and kindred aligning with Turkey and Turks on the one hand and the rejection and contempt of Turkish women's beauty and smoking practices on the other hand depend on each other in triggering the becoming of a desirable Azerbaijani national identity. As Navaro-Yashin (2012, 95) argues, 'that which one wants, and glosses as the condition for one's survival, is an effect of one's dependence and subordination.' Referencing Turkey and Turkishness in positive as well as negative terms becomes the constitutive condition to realise the enjoyment of the Azerbaijani nation.

In order to understand the force of affective nationalism, the analysis of relations of desire that evoke the pleasures people take in identifying with the nation becomes important. Relations of desire help to understand why feelings of national belonging and alienation persist, or, in other

words, why nationalism, racism and xenophobia continue to organise people across space and time in a world divided into different nations.

# 8 Affective nationalism – the new nationalism?

In response to the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States on 9 November 2016, *The Economist* proclaimed the era of 'the new nationalism.' This new nationalism, according to the magazine, is a 'pessimistic and dangerously zero-sum nationalism' (*The Economist* 2016, 5) that puts nations in competition with each other and with transnational, global processes. It is not just *The Economist*, however, that is horrified about the current diffusion of nationalism across the globe. At least since citizens of the UK voted 'Leave' earlier in 2016, Hungary's government of Victor Orbán pushed the erection of a barbed-wired fence along the South-eastern border of the Schengen Area in summer 2015 and the right-wing populist party *Alternative for Germany* was elected into ten out of the sixteen parliaments of the federal states between 2014 and 2016, various Western media outlets, talk shows and intellectual debates have been busy with frantically searching for the root of the new nationalism's evil.

In doing so, these public and intellectual debates seem to discover the central role emotions, feelings and embodiment play for the emergence and the transformation of nationalisms. Yet, it seems, likewise, difficult to make sense of these emotions and corporeal experiences. The emotional outburst of a xenophobic protestor against immigration and the irrational argumentation of a right-wing populist appear tangible and intangible, systematic and messy at once. It is precisely this 'messiness', however, that is, according to Ahmed (2015, 210),

> a good starting point for thinking with feeling: feelings are messy such that even if we regularly talk about having feelings, as if they are [ours], they also often come at us, surprise us, leaving us cautious and bewildered.

The new nationalism's evil, thus, seem to grapple with these messy experiences of feeling national belonging and alienation, that once, under the pseudonym of 'enlightened patriotism' (*The Economist* 2016, 9), enjoyed respect and confirmation and appeared less problematic. And yet, it is from these messy feelings of national belonging and alienation, of feeling national shame and pride at once, and of sensing an ungraspable corporeality while hearing the national anthem, that my research departs.

At the beginning, I asked in what ways national feelings emerge and how these feelings orient different bodies and objects towards each other, stimulating the becoming of shared practices and communities of collective emotions. I was also curious to explore the ways in which nationalism manifests in people's everyday lives; such as when I tried to understand why Azerbaijani football

fans would wrap themselves in the national flag. Let me recapitulate the conceptual, empirical and methodological moves I advance throughout this thesis, to find answers to these questions.

*Conceptually*, I propose that affect is at the heart of nationalism. This does not mean abandoning the study of mundane objects and practices and the meanings they carry. Yet, it does mean enquiring in greater depth into the corporeal work those objects and practices do to create a community where different bodies resonate with each other. My concept of affective nationalism – which I define as the banal affirmation of the national emerging in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects – builds on and expands the existing body of work interested in banal (Billig 1995), embodied (Mayer 2004) and emotional (Faria 2014a; Kingsbury 2011) nationalisms by emphasising the importance of the multiplicity of bodies and encounters in flows of constant becomings. Affective nationalism sees nationalism as an everyday experience, including and excluding differently marked bodies to different extents into or from national communities in moments of affective encounter.

Feminist perspectives on Spinozist-Deleuzean affect in combination with the Lacanian idea of desire form the basis of my conceptual framework (Ahmed 2004c; Berlant 2012; Wetherell 2012). I perceive affect as resulting from transpersonal relations between different bodies and objects whereas these bodies and objects have different capacities to affect and to be affected. While affective relations organise bodies and objects across space and time, constant processes of becoming make for bodily encounters and thus national affection. Lacan's notion of desire takes a central position within this conceptualisation of affect as senses of incompleteness and dissatisfaction mark emerging experiences of national identification. Understanding the relations of desire constituting these inherent deficiencies is crucial for explanations of the enduring enjoyment of identifying with the nation.

I suggest to attend to four different processes to analyse, for example, the emergence of the sound of *the* national anthem(s), the ways in which it grips the body and why it seems impossible to not pay attention to this sound. Affective nationalism, I argue, develops through embodying, orienting, binding and persisting.

The first process in the constitution of affective nationalism analyses the becoming of national bodies and corporeal movements that trigger national meaning. By attending to the different affective capacities of bodies, objects and places involved in moments of affective encounter, processes of embodying nationhood account for the contingency of feeling national belonging or alienation. The second process of orienting these emergent bodies and objects towards each other

addresses the mechanisms at stake in attaching and detaching them. Through the activation of different bodily histories in moments of affective encounter, experiences of liking or disliking ritualistic practices organise different bodies and objects across national space and time. In particular, the enchantment of these ritualistic practices and the orientation different bodies share or do not share towards objects, align people to and separate them from feeling national belonging. The ways in which these emergent and oriented bodies and objects merge into communities of sharing national emotions is of core interest to the third process of affective nationalism. Through processes of binding, sharing intensities of collective emotions merge different bodies into senses of national communities. The final process in understanding the workings of affective nationalism, which I have termed persisting, addresses the ways in which relations of desire between senses of national self and senses of national other sustain the enjoyment of feeling national belonging despite the nation's constant failures.

*Empirically*, I propose to turn to everyday encounters in Azerbaijan. In a context of omnipresent attempts of an elite-led nationalism, people experience feelings of national belonging and alienation through bodily encounters between different people, objects and places in everyday life. These encounters occur in aleatory ways and are often physically detached from national symbolisms such as the anthem, the flag or the portrait of the president.

Through revisiting my autoethnographic experience of female folk dancing in Azerbaijan I showed how bodies become national bodies through their different capacities to affect and to be affected. Bodily discomfort while dancing, for example, transforms the corporeality of moving on a dance-floor into an experience of a national way of female dancing in Azerbaijan. Yet, it is not the mere dancing or performance of a specific corporeal gesture that turns bodily experiences into national ones. What is key is, rather, the bodily encounter and its specificities. The different bodies and objects involved at a certain place and time, such as my body, the sound of a certain type of music filling the acoustic space of a room and other dancing bodies performing specific moves, produce felt normalities of corporeal comfort and discomfort and confirm senses of cultural knowledge about the nation. Apart from gendered dance performances, the maintenance of a female body in shape and dressed-up, promises another way of feeling national belonging in Azerbaijan. Affective beauty, spurred through the (anticipated) experiences of encountering other people, performs body work through the production of desired Azerbaijani corporealities.

In Azerbaijan, different bodies, objects and places align through the shared delight people take in performing ritual practices, such as the celebration of *Novruz Bayramı* in March every year. As a holiday celebrated in several places across the globe, the *Novruz* festivities spark delight with people

in Azerbaijan through the enactment of small differences in celebrating within Azerbaijani families. Indeed, a sense of nation emerges through a shared visceral euphoria of celebrating *Novruz*. People appropriate the holiday as a personal, in fact, as their *own* holiday as the celebration of *Novruz* rituals is staged within the intimate realm of the family. While the current government increasingly politicises the holiday and the symbols connected with it, such as fire, people enjoy *Novruz Bayramı* because of the enchanting qualities of its ritualistic enactment. These enchanting qualities emerge as national qualities constituting an Azerbaijani identity.

What is more, the encounter with the smell of burned *üzərlik* – a dried plant, whose smoke people use for various spiritual and recreational reasons – activates bodily histories that incite pleasure or disgust, depending on the specific orientations different bodies and objects share towards each other. Whereas sharing a positive orientation towards the smell opens up the experience of belonging to a national Azerbaijani space, sensing disgust in the encounter with the smell engenders feelings of national alienation.

I further argue, that the sense of a shared Azerbaijani national community emerges through collective experiences of pain and pride. The two main commemoration events, the Khojaly massacre on 26 February 1992 and the so-called Black January incident from 20 January 1990, are often considered to mark a trauma for the entire Azerbaijani population. The visceral and exaggerated narratives and commemoration practices, in particular, make Khojaly a tangible experience of the historical present. This experience of Khojaly unfolds through the embodiment of pain and anger, turning grieving bodies into nationally concerned bodies through their shared intensity of feeling pain. Whereas the Khojaly remembrance victimises the body of the Azerbaijani nation, leaving – with the unresolved conflict about the territory of Nagorny-Karabakh – a national wound that has not yet healed, the commemoration practices on 20 January transform the dead bodies that died for the sake of the nation from victims into victors. In remembering what happened on 20 January 1990 in Baku, people feel belonging to a national community of Azerbaijanis through shared intensities of feeling national pride and strength.

Finally, Turkey and senses of Turkishness unfold as a national other in Azerbaijan. For a majority of people living in Azerbaijan these senses of Turkishness and Turkey spawn the enjoyment and thus the endurance of identifying as Azerbaijani and with Azerbaijan. On the one hand, the designation of Turkey as a big brother state structures people's identification as Azerbaijani. The relationship with Turkey develops either in form of affection between the Azerbaijani and the Turkish nation or through identifying as Turkish in feeling Azerbaijani. On the other hand, a

feminised Turkish nationhood emerges as the despised form of embodying national identities. Yet, to identify as an Azerbaijani woman becomes enjoyable precisely because to identify as a Turkish woman is not. Either way, Turkish components in processes of national identification seek to complement the lacking sense of an Azerbaijani self.

The final contribution of this thesis is a *methodological* one. I advance an affective methodology that enables capturing and presencing moments of affective encounter through ethnographic field research and the production of written vignettes. My autoethnographic account centring on affective experience heeds the contextuality of nationalising practices in everyday life and reflects, in particular, the positionality of the researcher's body. Since the affective capacities of bodies involved in the research process influence what attracts the researcher's attention and what remains neglected, taking affective moments in the research process seriously asks for an increased awareness of somatic traces of affection in the researcher's affected body through seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, touching or feeling.

Through proposing the method of affective writing – a writing through and with affect instead of about it –, I contribute to discussions on how the affective can be empirically studied (Müller 2015; Vannini 2015b). Producing vignettes, which I understand as the written output of a thick description of moments central to my research, that resonate with the reader make moments of affective nationalism felt. Despite the aleatory incommensurability of bodies' affective capacities, bodies can stimulate and be disturbed in similar ways. Operating in similar systems of meaning-making, thus, allows bodies, including the reader's and the writer's bodies, to resonate with each other and to communicate national belonging as well as exclusion through affections.

The critical reader may object that I stick to the terms nationalism and national, when that which unfolds in moments of affective encounter could equally be described as experiences producing cultural connections and disconnections and thus as rendering communities of cultural sharing. Why do I propose a concept of affective *nationalism* instead of, for example, affective *culturalism*?

I understand both the idea of nation and the idea of culture, as emergent experiences of collectiveness. Neither a nation nor a culture are given entities organising people's lives. Rather, the experience of (not) sharing nationhood or a specific culture emerges in moments of encounter between different bodies and objects. The felt realities of feeling a belonging to a nation often coalesce with the sense of sharing cultural practices. Culture co-constitutes experiences of nationhood and vice versa. Homi Bhabha (1994, 140) then understands nation as a

> form of living the *locality* of culture [...]: a form of living that is more complex than "community"; more symbolic than "society"; more connotative than "country"; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than the reason of State; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous then hegemony; less centred than the citizens; more collective than "the subject"; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.

Here nation comes to stand for everyday lived experiences transgressing analytical, ideological or institutional boundaries of meaningful categories such as, society, country, state, ideology or citizenship. In fact, Gregory Jusdanis (2001, 162) even argues that 'the debate over civic or ethnic nationalism, political or cultural nations is pointless because at the end all nationalism takes on a cultural dimension.'

Yet, national languages, institutions and regulations frame the context of my research. I feel like sharing a consumer, communication or food culture with many people in the world, independent from the national denomination on their passports. Hence, when it comes to local politics, to presidential elections, to watching television or listening to the radio national categories ordering people across space and time become the felt realities that matter.

Affective nationalism makes a difference to how we think of these national categories and practice geographic scholarship on nationalism and nations in at least three different ways.

First, key to the workings of affective nationalism are *moments of bodily encounter*. Nationalism happens through, within, despite and because of encounters between different bodies, objects, practices and places, rendering especially the doings and the experiences of bodily encounters important. On the one hand, it is within and through affective encounters that feelings of national sameness or difference unfold, that bodies and objects belong or do not belong and that national objects and meanings emerge, transform or collapse. On the other hand, elite-led nation-building programmes seek to continuously establish encounters between different people, materially produced national representations and specific ideologies in order to manipulate national mythologies and who and what belongs to a desired sense of nation and who or what does not.

Following the Spinozist-Deleuzean philosophy of affirmation that strongly influences my thinking about nationalism, identification and difference, encounters bear potential for the emergence of something new, of the unforeseen, of the unexpected. Encounters produce possibilities and potentialities. For questions of nationalism that means that the attention towards affective encounters between different bodies and objects sparks imaginations of the possibilities of non-

nationalist rhetoric during future presidential elections or the potentiality of dissolving senses of the threatening Muslim migrant and turning her into a citizen of the world community with the right to live wherever she feels at home instead of making her passport be in charge of this decision.

Even though geographic scholarship often assumes powerful encounters (Leitner 2012; Valentine 2008), conceptualisations of *how* encounters engender difference, elicit emotions and (dis)connect different bodies, are rare. Helen Wilson's comprehensive discussion and, in fact, conceptualisation of the idea of encounter marks a notable exception. For her, encounters do not only have 'transformative capacit[ies]' (2016, 14). She also acknowledges an 'ambiguity [that] is not only a core feature of encounters, but is what makes encounters of analytical interest' (ibid.). It is this attention to uncertainties and inexplicabilities that makes the analysis of moments of bodily encounter relevant for the study of nationalism, as feeling national belonging or alienation means first and foremost feeling different in ambiguous and elusive ways.

These considerations about the centrality of feeling different in experiencing nationalism bring me to the second implication I would like to emphasise, the importance of recognising *bodies' and objects' different capacities to affect and to be affected.* Acknowledging people's different capacities to develop attachments to a specific music, to feel emotionally invested in the commemoration of dead bodies or to enjoy a certain type of food is key to understand the fundamental contingency and potentiality of the emergence of all nationalisms. Yet, the enactment of ritualistic practices, such as the annual celebration of a national holiday, and repetitive activities, such as attending school in one country, cultivate affective capacities and eventually align bodies through fostering similar ways of resonating in moments of affection. People blend into national communities through sharing intensities of bodily appropriated feelings.

Feminist geographers, in particular, have emphasised that 'affective registers have to be understood within the context of power geometries that shape our social world' (Tolia-Kelly 2006, 213). In order to understand the force of nationalism in engendering, binding and separating different bodies, it is crucial to not only continuously return to the site of the body, but, to also acknowledge the specific locations from which national bodies emerge.

The significance of a specific *spatial context and situatedness of affective nationalism*, is the third, explicit geographic implication to nationalism scholarship, that I want to push forward. Indeed, affective nationalism as the emergence of feeling national belonging and alienation does not work everywhere and with any situational configuration of bodies, objects and places. If I decide to stay alone, locked into my apartment, avoid any encounter with other people, the news or the radio and remain wary of anything that could spark potential confusion, irritation or unexpectedness, I might

as well neither experience national belonging nor alienation. In an opposite sense, the exposure to new things, unexpected routines or travelling abroad trigger an even greater potential for moments of bodily encounter that, through activating bodily histories and past experiences, inspire experiences of nationalism. The spatial contextuality of affective nationalism also implies that the encounter with the sound of the national anthem, for example, might shock me while attending a public viewing event in order to watch an international football match together with hundreds of other people. The encounter with the same sound, however, might likewise leave me unimpressed or incite enjoyable feelings of national belonging once I feel safe and sound in my backyard watching the same football match within a circle of friends.

What remains for me at the end is to answer the question I posed in the chapter title: is affective nationalism the new nationalism? Is it the new brand of nationalism we see in the United States, the UK, Russia, Azerbaijan and elsewhere? Clearly, my answer is no. Affective nationalism is not the new nationalism which *The Economist* announced. It has always been with us and in us, between us and beyond us. Studying affective nationalism asks for an all-together different perspective on what we have grown accustomed to think of as nationalism. A perspective that does not take the experience of nationalism for granted, but that studies nationalism as an emergent, collective feeling of being situated in the world. Whether we like it or not, that makes affective nationalism not the prerogative of populists and demagogues around the world – but a part of each and everyone of us.

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# Curriculum Vitae

Name: **MILITZ**
First Name: **Elisabeth**
Date of birth: **02 January 1984**
Nationality: **German**

## Education

| | |
|---|---|
| Since 10/2013 | **Doctoral studies**<br>*Zurich Graduate School in Geography, University of Zurich* |
| 08/2015 to 12/2015 | **Visiting PhD student**<br>*Department of Geography, University of Kentucky, KY* |
| 05/2012 to 07/2012 | **Visiting Fellow**<br>*Azerbaijan Tourism Institute, Baku, Azerbaijan* |
| 10/2011 to 09/2013 | **Doctoral studies**<br>*Department of Geography, Jena University* |
| 10/2010 | **Graduation as Diplom-Geographer (equiv. to MSc degree)**<br>*Heidelberg University*<br>Title of Diploma thesis: Spaces of freedom in Azerbaijan: an action-oriented network analysis of environmental NGOs |
| 10/2003 to 10/2010 | **BSc and MSc studies in Geography (major), Sociology and Biology (minors)**<br>*Heidelberg University* |
| 08/2005 to 05/2006 | **BSc and MSc studies in Geography and GIS**<br>*University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA* |
| 2003 | **Abitur** (Graduation from secondary school)<br>*Staffelsee-Gymnasium Murnau* |

## Employment during doctoral studies

| | |
|---|---|
| Since 10/2016 | **Research associate**<br>*Transcultural Studies, School of Social Science and Humanities, University of St. Gallen* |
| 10/2013 to 09/2016 | **PhD student and research assistant**<br>*Space & Organization, Department of Geography, University of Zurich* |
| 10/2011 to 09/2013 | **Lecturer**<br>*Economic Geography, Department of Geography, Jena University* |

## Publications during doctoral studies

| | |
|---|---|
| In print | 'On affect, dancing and national bodies'. In *Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*, edited by Michael Skey and Marco Antonsich. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. |
| 2016 | (with Carolin Schurr). 'Affective nationalism: banalities of belonging in Azerbaijan', *Political Geography* 54: 54-63. doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2015.11.002. |
| 2016 | 'Public Events and Nation-Building in Azerbaijan'. In *Nation-Building and Identity in the Post-Soviet Space: New Tools and Approaches*, edited by Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, 176–194. London, New York: Routledge. |

## Presentations during doctoral studies

| | |
|---|---|
| 04/2015 | 'Desiring Turkey in Azerbaijan', *Association of American Geographers*, Chicago, IL |
| 01/2015 | 'Affective nationalism: Wie das scheinbar Nebensächliche nationaler Zugehörigkeit zur Hauptsache wird', *Neue Kulturgeographie XII*, University of Bamberg |
| 12/2014 | 'Fantasien einer Nation: "Das" Türkische in Identitätskonstruktionen von Aserbaidschan', *Technical University Dresden* (invited lecture) |
| 11/2014 | 'Fantasies of the nation: Desiring Turkey in Azerbaijan', *12th Swiss Geoscience Meeting*, Fribourg |

10/2014 'Understanding the fragmentariness of national identification: Tracing the *real* in discourses on Turkishness in Azerbaijan', *Colloquium in Political Geography*, University of Zurich

09/2014 'Affective Nationalism: Banalities of Belonging in Azerbaijan', *Everyday Nationhood Symposium*, Birkbeck College, London

06/2014 'Reading emotions through a concept of affect', *Reading Emotions Conference*, University of Zurich

04/2014 'Tracing affect in everyday nationalism of Azerbaijan', *Association of American Geographers*, Tampa, FL

11/2013 '"Europe" as alluring fantasy: empirical insights from Azerbaijan', *11th Swiss Geoscience Meeting*, Lausanne

11/2013 'Azerbaijani enjoyment of "Europe"', *Postgraduate Workshop "Extra-territorial engagement of the EU"*, IFL Leipzig

04/2013 'Media-related constitution of identity and society in Azerbaijan using the example of the Eurovision Song Contest 2012 in Baku', *BASEES/ICCEES European Congress 2013*, Cambridge

02/2013 'Mediale Konstruktion von nationaler Identität in Aserbaidschan am Beispiel des Eurovision Song Contest 2012', *Colloquium of the Department of History*, Humboldt University Berlin (invited lecture)

08/2012 'Identity and geographical imagination in Azerbaijan' (poster presentation), *International Geographical Congress*, Cologne (awarded 3rd place for Best Graduate Student Poster)

## Grants and scholarships during doctoral studies

2015 Graduate School Grant for visiting fellowship at the University of Kentucky
*Department of Geography, University of Zurich*

2015 Travel grant for conference participation
*Swiss Geography Association, Bern*

2015 InnoPool project fund for project on topology in geography
*Department of Geography, University of Zurich*

2015 GRC grant for interdisciplinary workshop series on topology
*Graduate Campus, University of Zurich*

| | |
|---|---|
| 2014 | Forschungskredit (doctoral research fellowship)<br>*University of Zurich* |
| 2014 | Graduate school grants for conference participation<br>*Department of Geography, University of Zurich* |
| 2014 | Travel grant for conference participation<br>*Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bern* |
| 2012 | Scholarship to conduct doctoral field research in Azerbaijan<br>*German Academic Exchange Service, Bonn* |

## Teaching during doctoral studies

| | |
|---|---|
| Fall 2016 | **MA Seminar** 'Culture, Mobility and Space: Discussing Key Concepts of Transcultural Studies', *University of St. Gallen* (with Carolin Schurr) |
| Spring 2016 | **Tutorial** GEO 199, Small Group Teaching 'Globalisation', *Department of Geography, University of Zurich* |
| Fall 2014 | **Tutorial** GEO 299, Small Group Teaching 'Global Uncertainty', *Department of Geography, University of Zurich* |
| Spring 2013 | **Seminar** GEO 225 'Cultural Geography I', *Department of Geography, Jena University* (with Katharina König-Rimek and Ralf Leipold) |
| Fall 2012 | **5-day excursion to Genoa (Italy)** 'Migration, urban infrastructure and transnational mobilities' and **seminar** GEO 322 'Economic Geography III', *Department of Geography, Jena University* (with Julia Rösch)<br>**Seminar** GEO 427 'Cultural Geography II', *Department of Geography, Jena University* |
| Fall 2011 | **Seminar** GEO 322 'Economic Geography III', *Department of Geography, Jena University* (with Manuel Meier)<br>**Seminar** GEO 427 'Cultural Geography II', *Department of Geography, Jena University* (with Karsten Gäbler) |